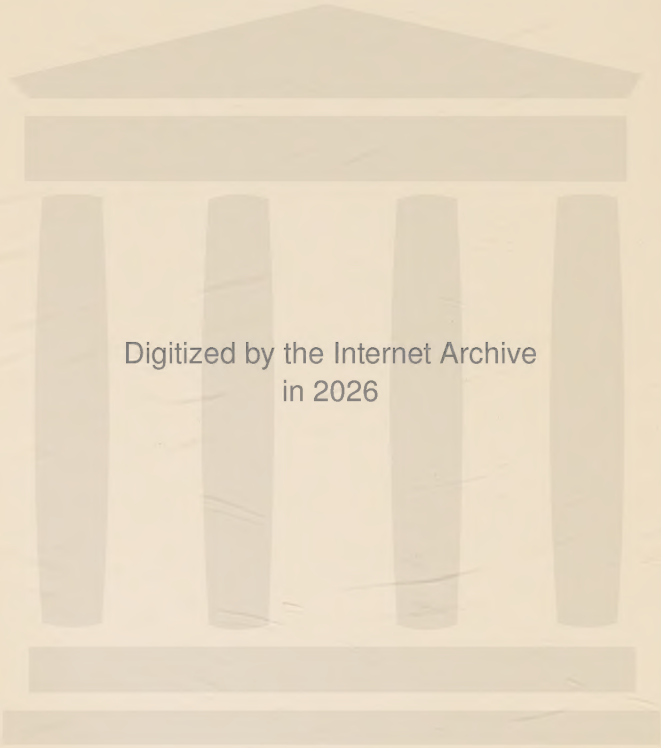
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IVÁN TURGÉNIEFF

VOLUME X

THE JEW & AND OTHER STORIES

THE NOVELS AND STORIES OF
IVÁN TURGÉNIEFF

THE JEW AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
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PREFACE

THE story of "The Jew," written in 1846, was regarded by the Russian critics as being distinguished for its simplicity of plot, and its conscientious realism,—especially in the portrait of Hirschel,—but not as of great importance. It evoked attacks upon the author from the Jews.

"Andréi Kólosoff," Turgénieff's first short story, was constructed—said the Russian critics—strictly in accordance with the views which, at that epoch (1844), were regarded as new and just. The author, then a government official, employed most of his time in reading George Sand's novels, and the traces of her influence are perceptible throughout this story. One critic objects that the author's view of his first hero is—in spite of its poetical coloring—unnatural, illogical, inhuman, unfaithful to reality, and that it does not conform to the character of Kólosoff as portrayed in the story. He maintains that no one would have tolerated the remarkable and incomparable Kólosoff in ordinary healthy life, because he was abnormal; and his abnormality gave rise to the same thing in all the other characters of the story. Byelínsky, the most famous of Russian critics,

said of it, three years after it was published, that although it contained many fine sketches and characters from Russian life yet, as a novel, it was, on the whole, so strange, incomplete, and clumsy that very few people had noticed its good points.

Of " The Bully " it was said by one prominent critic, that Turgénieff had indirectly helped to dethrone the native-born Byrons who were in high favour at the time of its appearance, in the eyes of Russian society, by representing Lutchkóff as a bad man. In this respect Turgénieff was in sympathy with the times. People were rising in protest against the all-conquering heroes of the '20s and '30s of the last century. And yet it was not altogether an easy matter, even then (1846), to present that aspect of the case to the public, while Petchórin (the hero of Lérmontoff's celebrated " A Hero of Our Times ") still enjoyed great credit in literature and society. Under the influence of the Petchórin ideal there had sprung up all over the land a great crop of trivial, insipid, conceited, and coarse-minded fops and ne'er-do-wells, who imagined that they belonged to the " rapacious " type. In the same way, long afterward, Turgénieff's novel " Fathers and Children " produced a huge crop of coarse and ignorantly-uncivilised idlers, who fancied that they were Bazároffs, notwithstanding the fact that the author had ridiculed such imita-

tions in advance, in the character of Sítnikoff in that same novel. Turgénieff, in " The Bully," turned the Petchórin type inside out, so to speak, and thereby annihilated it.

" Pyetushkóff " is regarded as one of the author's most unsuccessful efforts. One critic, while admitting that the idea of depicting the inebriation of love experienced for the first time in a simple-minded and indolent man, is worthy of Gógol, yet declares that Turgénieff reflects, in feeble fashion, that great humorist's views, manner, and even the peculiarities of his style,—quite involuntarily however. Another critic compares the author's attitude toward his hero and the latter's sad but absurd love to that of Dostoiévsky toward his hero, Makár Dyévushkin (in " Poor People ").

In " The Two Friends " there is no longer perceptible any trace of the influence of George Sand, Byron, or the Gógol element taken from the misanthropic point of view, say the Russian critics. Vyazovnín is thoroughly Russian, and as completely a " superfluous man " as Tchulkatúrin.[1] He represents the average type of discontented people—the " golden mean,"—well-intentioned, easily bored, easily incited to enthusiasm, easily swayed in various directions. The sketches of life are capital, simple as is the plot.

In its original form the story ended with Vya-

[1] See "The Diary of a Superfluous Man," Vol. XI.—Translator.

zovnín's accidental death by drowning; he was represented as falling from the deck of the steamer. In later editions Turgénieff extended the story considerably, and rendered it much more artistic; for only a limp and characterless Russian of the " intelligent " class, idly roaming over the Western Europe beloved of his heart, could die as Vyazovnín does in the duel with the strange Frenchman. The pages in which this duel is described belong, says one critic, among Turgénieff's best, and possess in addition this interest— that the artist, who was regarded by many and who regarded himself as a pure-blooded advocate of Western things and methods, here depicts the French with unconcealed ferocity and scorn for certain truly revolting and wretched qualities in their national character.

I. F. H.

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THE JEW

(1846)

THE JEW

"PRAY, tell us a story, Colonel," we said at last to Nikolái Ílitch. The Colonel smiled, emitted a stream of tobacco-smoke through his moustache, passed his hand over his grey hair, stared at us, and meditated. We all loved and respected Nikolái Ílitch extremely for his kind-heartedness, his sound sense, and his indulgence toward us youngsters. He was tall of stature, broad-shouldered, and corpulent. His swarthy face, "one of the glorious Russian faces,"[1] his frank-spirited, clever gaze, his gentle smile, his manly and resonant voice—everything about him pleased and attracted.

"Well, then, listen,"—he began.

It happened in the year '13, before Dantzig. I was then serving in the E** cuirassier regiment, and, as I recall it, had just been promoted to the rank of cornet. 'T is a merry occupation,—fighting and marching,—a fine thing, but in the besieging force things were very dull. You sit all God's day in some lodgment or other, under a tent, in the mud or straw, and play cards

[1] Lermontoff, in "The Treasurer's Wife."

from morning till night. Perhaps, out of sheer tedium, you go out to take a look at the way the hot shot or the bombs are flying.

At first the French comforted us with sallies, but they soon quieted down. Riding on foraging expeditions got tiresome also; in a word, such boredom descended upon us that we were fit to howl. I was only in my nineteenth year then; I was a healthy youngster, with a complexion of blood and milk, and I thought I would amuse myself at the expense of the French, and at the expense of . . . . well, you understand . . . but this is what came of it. For lack of something to do, I took to gambling. One day, after losing frightfully, luck turned in my favour, and toward morning (we were playing by night), I had won heavily. Exhausted and sleepy, I emerged into the open air and sat down on the glacis. It was a magnificent, calm morning; the long lines of our fortifications were lost in the mist; I looked about me, then fell into a doze where I sat. A cautious cough awakened me; I opened my eyes and beheld before me a Jew, about forty years of age, in a long-skirted grey kaftan, shoes, and a black skull-cap. This Jew, Hirschel by name, was constantly haunting our camp, intruding himself on the agents, furnishing us with wine, edibles, and other trifles; he was small of stature, thin, pock-marked, and red-haired; he was incessantly winking his tiny

eyes, which were also red; he had a long, crooked nose, and was eternally coughing.

He began to wriggle about in front of me, and make low bows.

"Well, what dost thou want?"—I asked him at last.

"Why, sir, I came to inquire, sir, whether I could not supply their[1] Well-Born with something. . . ."

"I have no need of thee; begone."

"As you command, sir, as you like, sir. . . . I thought that, possibly, there was something, sir . . . ."

"Thou borest me; begone, I tell thee."

"Certainly, certainly, sir. But permit me to congratulate their Well-Born on their winnings. . . ."

"How dost thou know about that?"

"And why should n't I know, sir? . . . . Big winnings . . . . big. . . . Phew! how big! . . . ."

Hirschel spread out his fingers widely, and nodded his head.

"But what 's the good of it?"—I said with vexation.—"What the devil is the use of money here?"

"Oh, don't say that, your Well-Born; áï, áï, don't say that. Money is a good thing; 't is always useful; everything can be had for

[1] "Their" (instead "of your") Well-Born indicates profound respect. The Jew talks broken Russian.—Translator.

money, your Well-Born,—everything, everything!"

"Stop lying, Jew!"

"Áï, áï!"—repeated Hirschel, shaking his ear-locks;—"their Well-Born does not believe me . . . áï . . . . áï . . . . áï. . . ." The Jew shut his eyes and slowly shook his head to the right and left. . . . "But I know what the Mr. Officer would like. . . . I know . . . . indeed I know!"

The Jew assumed a very cunning aspect. . . .

"Really?"

The Jew cast a timid glance about him, then bent toward me.

"Such a beauty, your Well-Born, such a beauty!" . . . Again Hirschel closed his eyes, and protruded his lips.—"Give the command, your Well-Born . . . you shall see for yourself . . . what I shall say now you will hear . . . . you will not believe it . . . . but you had better command me to show you . . . . that 's how, that 's what!"

I made no answer, and stared at the Jew.

"Well, good, then; well, that 's good; well now, I 'll show you. . . ." Here Hirschel burst out laughing and slapped me lightly on the shoulder, but immediately leaped back, as though he had been singed.

"Well, now, your Well-Born, how about a little deposit?"

"But thou wilt cheat me, or show me some scarecrow?"

"Áï, váï, what are you saying?"—exclaimed the Jew, with unwonted warmth, and flourishing his arms.—"How is it possible? But do you, your Well-Born . . . . command that I be given five hundred . . . . four hundred and fifty blows with a stick,"—he added hastily. . . "Do you give the command. . . ."

At that moment, one of my comrades raised the edge of the tent, and called me by name. I hastily rose, and tossed the Jew a ducat.

"This evening, this evening,"—he mumbled after me.

I must confess to you, gentlemen, that I awaited the evening with some impatience. On that same day the French made a sally; our regiment went to the attack. Evening drew on; we seated ourselves round the camp-fires . . . the soldiers cooked the buckwheat groats.—Discussions began. I lay on my *búrka,*[1] and listened to my comrades' tales. They proposed to me to play cards. I refused. I was in a state of agitation. Little by little the officers dispersed to their tents; the fires began to die out; the soldiers also had scattered, or fallen asleep on the spot; everything was quiet. I did not rise. My orderly was squatting on his heels before the

[1] A large Caucasian circular cloak, of heavy, impenetrable, shaggy felt.—TRANSLATOR.

fire and, as the saying is, "catching fish."—I drove him away. Soon the whole camp had grown silent. The watch made its round. The sentries were changed. I still lay there and waited for something. The stars came out. Night had come. For a long time I gazed at the expiring flame . . . . the last tiny spark died out at last. "The damned Jew has deceived me," I thought with vexation, and was on the point of rising. . . .

"Your Well-Born . . . ." whispered an anxious voice above my very ear.

I looked round: it was Hirschel. He was very pale, and stammered and lisped.

"Please go to your tent, sir."

I rose and followed him. The Jew was all shrunk together, and trod cautiously on the short, damp grass. I noticed on one side a motionless, muffled figure. The Jew waved his hand at it—it approached him. He whispered with it, turned to me, nodded his head several times, and all three of us entered the tent. Absurd to say, I was choking.

"Here, your Well-Born,"—whispered the Jew with an effort: "here. She 's a little frightened now, she 's frightened; but I have told her that the Mr. Officer is a good man, a fine man. . . . And thou must not be afraid, must not be afraid,"—he added,—"must not be afraid. . . ."

The muffled figure did not stir. I myself was

in a terrible state of confusion, and did not know what to say. Hirschel kept dancing up and down in one place, and throwing his hands apart in a strange sort of way. . . .

"But,"—I said to him, "leave the tent. . . ."

Hirschel obeyed with apparent unwillingness.

I stepped up to the muffled figure and gently removed the dark hood from its head. There was a conflagration in Dantzig; by the reddish, spasmodic and feeble reflection of the distant fire I beheld the pale face of a young Jewess. Her beauty startled me. I stood before her and gazed at her in silence. She did not raise her eyes. A faint rustle made me glance round. Hirschel was cautiously thrusting his head past the flap of the tent. I waved my hand at him in irritation . . . he disappeared.

"What is thy name?"—I said at last.

"Sara," she replied,—and for one instant the whites of her large, long eyes, and her little, even, gleaming teeth flashed in the gloom.

I seized two leather cushions, threw them on the ground, and asked her to sit down. She flung off her cloak and seated herself. She wore a short kazák jacket, open in front, with round, carved silver buttons, and wide sleeves. Her thick black braid of hair encircled her little head twice. I sat down beside her, and took her dark-skinned, slender hand. She resisted a little, but seemed to be afraid to look at me, and her breath

came unevenly. I admired her Oriental profile—and timidly pressed her cold, trembling fingers.

"Dost thou understand Russian?"

"Yes . . . a little."

"And dost thou love the Russians?"

"Yes, I do."

"So, then, thou lovest me?"

"Yes, I love you, also."

I tried to embrace her, but she hastily moved away. . . .

"No, no, please, master, please. . . ."

"Well, then, look at me, at least."

She fixed on me her black, piercing eyes, and immediately turned away with a smile and blushed.

I kissed her hand fervently. She cast a side-long glance at me, and broke into a soft laugh.

"What art thou laughing at?"

She covered her face with her sleeve and laughed more heartily than before. Hirschel made his appearance at the entrance to the tent, and shook his finger at her. She fell silent.

"Get out!" I whispered to him through my teeth.—"I 'm tired of thee!"

Hirschel did not withdraw.

I got a handful of ducats out of my chest, thrust them into his hand, and pushed him out.

"Give me some, too, master. . ." said she.

I tossed several ducats into her lap; she snatched them up nimbly, like a cat.

" Well, now I shall kiss thee."

" No, please, please,"—she lisped in a frightened and beseeching voice.

" What dost thou fear? "

" I 'm afraid."

" Come, enough of that. . . ."

" No, please. ."

She gazed timidly at me, bent her head a little on one side, and clasped her hands. I left her in peace.

" If thou wishest . . . here," she said, after a considerable pause, and raised her hand to my lips.

I kissed it not altogether willingly. Again Sara burst out laughing.

My blood choked me. I was vexed at myself and did not know what to do. " But," I thought at last, " what a fool I am! "

I turned to her again.

" Hearken, Sara, I 'm in love with thee."

" I know it."

" Thou knowest it? And thou art not angry? And dost thou love me? "

Sara nodded her head.

" No, answer me properly."

" Show yourself,"—said she.

I bent toward her. Sara laid her hands on my shoulders, began to scan my face, frowned, smiled. . . . I could not restrain myself and swiftly kissed her on the cheek. She sprang up,

and with one bound was at the entrance to the tent.

"Well, what a savage thou art!"

She made no reply, and did not stir from the spot.

"Come hither to me. . . ."

"No, master; farewell. Until another time."

Again Hirschel thrust in his little curly head and said a couple of words to her; she bent down and glided out like a serpent.

I rushed out of the tent after her, but saw neither her nor Hirschel.

All night long I could not get to sleep.

On the following morning we were sitting in the tent of our captain; I was gambling, but reluctantly. My orderly entered.

"Some one is asking for you, your Well-Born."

"Who wants me?"

"A Jew is asking for you."

"Can it be Hirschel?" I thought. I waited until the end of the deal, rose, and went out. In fact, I beheld Hirschel.

"Well,"—he asked me with a pleasant smile, "is your Well-Born satisfied?"

"Akh, devil take thee! . . ." (At this point the Colonel glanced round) ". . . I think there are no ladies present . . . however, never mind. Akh, damn thee, my dear fellow,"—I answered him; "art thou making game of me, pray?"

" Why so, sir? "

" What meanest thou by ' why so '? I should think thou wouldst ask! "

" Áï, áï, Mr. Officer, what a man you are,"—said Hirschel, reproachfully, but without ceasing to smile.—" The girl is young, modest . . . . you frightened her, really you frightened her."

" Fine modesty! Then why did she take the money? "

" And why not, sir? When money is offered, sir, why not take it? "

" Hark ye, Hirschel: let her come again; I will not let thee lose anything by it . . . only, be so good as not to show thy stupid phiz in my tent, and leave us in peace; hearest thou? "

Hirschel's eyes sparkled.

" Well? And does she please you? "

" Well, yes."

" A beauty! there 's no such beauty anywhere. And will you give me the money now? "

" Take it; only, hearken to me: an agreement is better than money. Fetch her, and take thyself off to the devil! I 'll conduct her home myself."

" But that is impossible, impossible, utterly impossible, sir,"—returned the Jew, hastily.—" Áï, áï, utterly impossible, sir. I will walk about near the tent, if you please, your Well-Born; I 'll—I 'll go a little way off, your Well-Born, if you like, . . . your Well-Born, I 'm ready to serve you;

I 'll go off a bit, if you please. . . . What say you to that? I 'll go off a bit."

" Well, see that thou dost. . . . But fetch her, hearest thou? "

" But she 's a beauty, is n't she, Mr. Officer? hey? Your Well-Born? A beauty? Hey? "

Hirschel bent forward, and gazed into my eyes.

" She 's very nice."

" Well, then, give me just one more little ducat. . . ."

I flung him a ducat; we parted.

The day came to an end at last. Night descended. For a long time I sat alone in my tent. The weather was overcast. The clock in the town struck two. I had already begun to curse the Jew . . . when, suddenly, Sara entered, alone. I sprang to my feet, embraced her . . . touched my lips to her face. . . . It was as cold as ice. I could barely distinguish her features. . . . I seated her, knelt down in front of her, took her hands, touched her waist. . . . She preserved silence, and did not stir, and suddenly burst out into loud, convulsive sobs. In vain did I strive to sooth her, to persuade her. . . . She sobbed and wept. . . . I caressed her, wiped away her tears; as before, she offered no resistance, did not reply to my questions, and wept, wept in torrents. My heart revolted within me; I rose and left the tent.

Hirschel ducked up in front of me, as though he had sprung out of the earth.

"Hirschel,"—I said to him,—"here is the money I promised thee. Take Sara away.

The Jew immediately rushed to her. She had ceased weeping, and clung to him.

"Good-bye, Sara," I said to her.—"God be with thee, farewell. We shall meet again some other time."

Hirschel maintained silence and saluted. Sara bent down, took my hand, and pressed it to her lips; I turned away. . . .

Five or six days, gentlemen, I thought of my Jewess. Hirschel did not make his appearance, and no one had seen him in the camp. At night I slept rather badly: I kept seeing visions of moist black eyes and long lashes; my lips could not forget the touch of that cheek, as smooth and fresh as the skin of a plum. I was sent with a detachment on a foraging expedition to a distant hamlet. While my soldiers were rummaging the houses I remained in the street, and did not alight from my horse. Suddenly, some one seized me by the foot. . . .

"Great heavens, Sara!"

She was pale and agitated.

"Mr. Officer, mister . . . . help, save, the soldiers are insulting us. . . . Mr. Officer . . . .

She recognised me, and flushed up.

"But dost thou live here?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

Sara pointed out to me a tiny, ancient house. I gave my horse the spur, and galloped thither. In the yard of the little house, a hideous, dishevelled Jewess was endeavouring to wrest from the hands of my long quartermaster, Silyávka, three chickens and a duck. He had raised his booty high above his head and was laughing; the chickens were cackling, the duck was quacking. . . . Two other cuirassiers had laden their horses with hay, straw, and flour-sacks. In the house itself, Little Russian exclamations and oaths were audible. . . . I shouted at my men and ordered them to leave the Jews in peace, to take nothing from them. The soldiers obeyed; the quartermaster mounted his brown mare, Proserpine, or, as he called her, "Prozherpyla," and rode out into the street in my wake.

"Well," I said to Sara,—"art thou satisfied with me?"

She looked at me with a smile.

"Where hast thou been hiding thyself all this time?"

She dropped her eyes.

"I will come to you to-morrow."

"In the evening?"

"No, sir, in the morning."

"See that thou dost not deceive me."

"No . . . . no, I will not deceive thee."

I gazed eagerly at her. By day she seemed to be even more beautiful. I remember that I was particularly struck with the dull amber tint of her face and the bluish reflections of her black hair. . . . I bent down from my horse, and pressed her little hand warmly.

"Farewell, Sara . . . see that thou comest."

"I will come."

She went home; I ordered my quartermaster to follow me with the detachment, and galloped off.

On the following day I rose very early and went out of my tent. It was a wondrously beautiful morning; the sun had only just risen, and a moist crimson light sparkled on every blade of grass. I mounted the high breastwork and seated myself on the edge of an embrasure. Beneath me a fat iron cannon thrust its black muzzle into the fields. I gazed absent-mindedly on all sides . . . . and suddenly beheld, about a hundred paces distant, a bent figure in a grey kaftan. I recognised Hirschel. He stood for a long time motionless in one spot, then suddenly ran off a little to one side, cast a hasty and timorous glance around him . . . grunted, squatted down, cautiously stretched out his neck, and again began to gaze about him, and to listen. I could see all his movements with perfect distinctness. He thrust his hand into his breast, drew out a scrap of paper and a pencil, and began to write or

sketch something. Hirschel kept incessantly pausing, quivering like a hare, attentively scanning his surroundings, and was apparently making a drawing of our camp. More than once he hid his paper, screwed up his eyes, sniffed the air, and again bent to his work. At last the Jew squatted down on the grass, took off his shoe, and thrust in the paper; but before he had managed to straighten himself up again, suddenly, ten paces from him, from behind the slope of the glacis, the moustached head of quartermaster Silyávka made its appearance, and gradually his whole long, clumsy body raised itself a little from the ground. The Jew was standing with his back to him. Silyávka walked briskly up to him and laid his heavy paw on his shoulder. Hirschel shrivelled up. He shook like a leaf, and emitted a wailing, hare-like cry. Silyávka spoke menacingly to him, and seized him by the collar. I could not hear their conversation, but from the despairing movements of the Jew's body, from his beseeching mien, I began to divine what the matter was. A couple of times the Jew flung himself at the quartermaster's feet, thrust his hand into his pocket, pulled out a tattered checked handkerchief, untied a knot in it, and got out a ducat. . . . Silyávka gravely accepted the gift, but did not cease to drag the Jew by the collar. Hirschel broke loose and darted to one side; the quartermaster set out in pursuit of

him. The Jew ran with extreme swiftness; his legs, clad in blue stockings, twinkled very fast indeed, in fact; but Silyávka, after two or three "spurts," caught the squatting Jew, lifted him up, and carried him in his arms straight toward the camp. I rose and went to meet him.

"Ah! your Well-Born!"—shouted Silyávka: "I 'm bringing you a spy,—a spy!" . . . The perspiration poured in streams from the face of the Little Russian.—"Come, stop that wriggling, thou devil's Jew! stop it, I say . . . damn thee! if thou dost not, I 'll crush thee—look out!"

The unhappy Hirschel pushed feebly with his elbows against Silyávka's breast, and feebly kicked his legs about. . . . His eyes rolled convulsively upward. . . .

"What 's the matter?"—I inquired of Silyávka.

"Why, here, your Well-Born: please to remove the shoe from his right foot,—it 's awkward for me."—He still held the Jew in his arms.

I removed the shoe, took out the carefully-folded bit of paper, unfolded it, and beheld a detailed sketch of our camp. On the margins stood numerous comments, written in a very fine script, in the Jewish tongue.

In the meantime, Silyávka had set the Jew on his legs. The Jew opened his eyes, saw me, and flung himself on his knees before me.

I silently showed him the paper.

"What 's this?"

"That is—just,—Mr. Officer. I just made that by chance."—His voice broke.

"Art thou a scout?"

He did not understand me, muttered incoherent words, and tremulously touched my knees. . . .

"Art thou a spy?"

"Áï!"—he cried faintly, and shook his head. —"How is that possible? I never was; I am nothing of the sort. I can't be; it is n't possible. I 'm ready. This instant. I 'll give money . . . . I 'll pay,"—he whispered, and closed his eyes.

His skull-cap had fallen back on his nape; his red hair, damp with cold sweat, hung in elf-locks; his lips had turned blue and were spasmodically contorted; his brows were painfully contracted; his cheeks were sunken. . . .

The soldiers surrounded us. At first I had felt like giving Hirschel a good fright, and ordering Silyávka to hold his tongue; but now the affair had become public, and could not be kept from the knowledge of the authorities.

"Conduct him to the General,"—I said to the quartermaster.

"Mr. Officer, your Well-Born!"—shrieked the Jew in a voice of despair:—"I am not guilty; I am not guilty. . . . Order them to release me, order . . . ."

"His Excellency will settle that,"—said Silyávka.—"Come along."

"Your Well-Born!"—the Jew screamed after me:—"give orders! have mercy!"

His shriek worried me. I hastened my steps.

Our General was a man of German extraction, honourable and kind-hearted, but a strict executor of the regulations of the service. I entered his small, hastily-built house, and in a few words explained to him the cause of my visit. I was familiar with all the strictness of the military regulations, and therefore did not even utter the word "spy," but endeavoured to represent the whole affair as unimportant, and not worth attention. But, unluckily for Hirschel, the General placed the fulfilment of duty above compassion.

"Young man,"—he said to me,—"you are inexperienced. You are, as yet, inexperienced in military affairs. The matter which[1] (the General was very fond of the word "which") you have reported to me is important, very important. . . . And where is that man who was captured? that Hebrew? Where is he?"

I went out of the tent, and ordered the Jew to be led in.

The Jew was led in. The unhappy wight could barely stand on his legs.

[1] The General pronounces it *kótóryi* instead of *kotóryi*.—TRANSLATOR.

"Yes,"—said the General, turning to me:—"and where is that plan which was found on this man?"

I handed him the paper. The General unfolded it, moved backward, puckered up his eyes, and contracted his brows in a frown.

"This is a-ma-zing . . . ." he said with pauses between the syllables.—"Who arrested him?"

"I, your Excellency!"—blurted out Silyávka, sharply.

"Ah! Good! good! . . . . Well, my good man, what hast thou to say in thine own defence?"

"Yo . . . yo . . . . your Excellency,"—stammered Hirschel:—"I . . . . pray . . . . your Excellency . . . . am not guilty . . . ask the Sir Officer if I am, your Excellency. . . . I 'm an agent, your Excellency, an honest agent."

"He must be cross-examined,"—said the General in a low voice, shaking his head pompously.—"Well, and what is thy plea, my good man?"

"Not guilty, your Excellency, not guilty."

"But that is incredible. Thou hast been caught deservedly, as the expression is in Russian—that is to say, in the very act!"

"Permit me to say, your Excellency, that I am not guilty."

"Didst thou draw the plan? Art thou a spy of the enemy?"

"Not I!"—cried Hirschel, suddenly:—"not I, your Excellency!"

The General glanced at Silyávka.

"Why, he 's lying, your Excellency. The Sir Officer got the document out of his shoe himself."

The General looked at me. I was compelled to nod my head.

"Thou art a scout of the enemy, my good man, ... my good man. . . ."

"Not I. . . . Not I . . . ." whispered the distracted Jew.

"Thou hast already furnished the enemy with similar information? Confess. . . ."

"How is that possible!"

"Thou shalt not deceive me, my good man. Art thou a scout?"

The Jew shut his eyes, shook his head, and raised the skirts of his kaftan.

"Hang him,"—said the General expressively, after a brief pause,—"in accordance with the laws. Where is Mr. Feódor Schlikelmann?"

They ran for Schlikelmann, the General's adjutant. Hirschel turned green, his mouth fell open, his eyes protruded. The adjutant presented himself. The General gave him the requisite instructions. The regimental secretary showed his gaunt, pock-marked face for a moment. Two or three officers looked into the room out of curiosity.

"Have mercy, your Excellency,"—I said to the General in German, to the best of my ability: —"release him. . . ."

"You, young man,"—he replied to me in Russian,—"you are inexperienced, as I have already told you, and therefore I beg that you will hold your peace, and not trouble me further."

Hirschel flung himself with a shriek at the General's feet.

"Your Excellency, have mercy, I won't do it again—I won't, your Excellency, I have a wife . . . . your Excellency, I have a daughter . . . . have mercy. . . ."

"What can I do?"

"I be guilty, your Excellency, I be really guilty . . . . for the first time, your Excellency, for the first time, believe me!"

"Thou hast not furnished any other papers?"

"For the first time, your Excellency . . . . a wife . . . children . . . . have mercy. . . ."

"But thou art a spy."

"A wife . . . . your Excellency . . . . children. . . ."

It was very distasteful to the General, but there was no way out of it.

"In accordance with the laws the Jew must be hanged,"—he said slowly and with the aspect of a man who is forced, reluctantly, to sacrifice his better feelings to inexorable duty.—"He must

hang! Feódor Kárlitch, I request that you will write a report of these proceedings, which . . . ."

A strange change suddenly came over Hirschel. In place of the tremulous fear peculiar to the Jew, the terrible agony which precedes death was depicted on his countenance. He flung himself about like a captured wild animal, opened his mouth, rattled dully in his throat, even leaped up and down on the spot, convulsively flourishing his elbows. He had but one shoe on; they had forgotten to restore the other to his foot; . . . the breast of his kaftan flew open . . . his skull-cap fell off. . .

We all shuddered; the General remained silent.

" Your Excellency,"—I began again:—" pardon this unhappy man."

" Impossible. The law enjoins,"—returned the General abruptly, and not without emotion:—" he will serve as an example to others."

" For God's sake. . . ."

" Mr. Cornet, be so good as to go to your post,"—said the General, and pointed me to the door with a commanding gesture.

I saluted and retired. But as I had no actual post anywhere, I halted at a short distance from the General's little house.

Two minutes later, Hirschel made his appearance accompanied by Silyávka and three soldiers. The poor Jew was in a state of stupor, and could barely move his legs. Silyávka passed me on his

way to the camp, and speedily returned with a rope in his hands. Strange, harsh compassion was portrayed on his coarse but not malicious face. At the sight of the rope, the Jew dropped his hands in despair, squatted down, and began to sob. The soldiers stood in silence around him, and stared grimly at the ground. I stepped up to Hirschel, and spoke to him; he was sobbing like a child, and did not even look at me. I waved my hand, went off to my own quarters, flung myself on my bed, and closed my eyes. . . .

Suddenly some one ran hastily and noisily into my tent. I raised my head and beheld Sara. She seemed wild with fright. She darted toward me, and seized my hands.

"Come, come, come,"—she repeated, in a panting voice.

"Whither? Why? Let us remain here."

"To father, to father, be quick . . . . save him . . . . save him!"

"To what father?"

"To my father; they are going to hang him. . . ."

"What! Is it possible that Hirschel . . . ."

"He is my father. . . . I will explain everything to thee afterward,"—she added, wringing her hands in despair:—"only come . . . . come. . . ."

We ran out of the tent. In the field, on the road to a solitary birch-tree, a group of soldiers

was visible. . . . Sara pointed dumbly at it with her finger. . . .

"Stop!"—I said suddenly:—"whither are we running? The soldiers will not obey me."

Sara continued to drag me after her. . . . I must confess that my head reeled.

"But hearken, Sara," I said to her: "what 's the sense in running thither? I had better go once more to the General; let us go together; perhaps we can move him by entreaties."

Sara suddenly paused and stared at me like a mad creature.

"Understand me, Sara, for God's sake! I have not the power to pardon thy father, but the General can. Let us go to him."

"But in the meanwhile they will hang him,"—she moaned. . . .

I glanced round. The regimental secretary stood not far off.

"Iványoff," I said to him:—"run, please, to the men yonder: order them to wait; say that I have gone to entreat the General."

"I obey, sir."

Iványoff hastened off.

They would not admit us to the General's presence. In vain did I plead, and argue, at last even swear . . . . in vain did poor Sara tear her hair and fling herself upon the sentries: we were not admitted.

Sara gazed wildly about her, clutched her head

in both hands, and ran headlong across the field to her father. I ran after her. People stared at us in amazement. . . .

We hurried up to the soldiers. They were standing in a circle, and—just imagine, gentlemen, were jeering at poor Hirschel! I flared up, and shouted at them. The Jew caught sight of us, and flung himself on his daughter's neck. Sara clasped him convulsively.

The poor man imagined that he had been pardoned. . . . He had already begun to thank me. . . . I turned away.

"Your Well-Born,"—he shouted, and clasped his hands tightly,—"am not I pardoned?"

I made no reply.

"No?"

"No."

"Your Well-Born,"—he mumbled:—"look, your Well-Born, look . . . . for she—this young maiden here—you know—she is my daughter."

"I know,"—I answered, and again turned away.

"Your Well-Born!"—he screamed:—"I did n't go away from the tent! I would n't, for anything. . . ." He paused and shut his eyes for a moment. . . . "I wanted your money, your Well-Born, I must confess, your money . . . . but I would n't for anything . . . ."

I preserved silence. Hirschel was repulsive to me—yes, and she was his accomplice. . . .

" But now, if you will save me,"—said the Jew in a whisper,—" I will command—I . . . . you understand? . . . everything . . . . I 'll do anything. . . ."

He trembled like a leaf, and cast a hasty glance about him. Sara embraced him silently and passionately.

The adjutant stepped up to them.

" Mr. Cornet,"—he said to me:—" his Excellency has given orders to arrest you. And you . . . ." he silently pointed out the Jew to the soldiers . . . . " will immediately . . . ."

Silyávka approached the Jew.

" Feódor Kárlitch,"—I said to the adjutant (five soldiers had come with him) :—" pray, give orders, at least, that this poor girl shall be removed. . . ."

" Of course. I agree, sir."

The unhappy girl was barely breathing. Hirschel muttered something in her ear, in the Jewish tongue. . . .

With difficulty the soldiers freed Sara from the paternal embrace, and carefully carried her off about twenty paces. But she suddenly wrested herself from their hands, and darted toward Hirschel . . . . Silyávka stopped her. Sara thrust him aside; a slight flush covered her face, her eyes flashed, she extended her arms.

" Then may you be accursed,"—she shrieked in German:—" accursed, thrice accursed, you and

all your hateful race, with the curse of Dathan and Abiram, with the curse of poverty, of sterility and impotence, of shameful death! May the earth also yawn beneath your feet, ye godless ones, ye pitiless, bloodthirsty dogs. . . ."

Her head fell backward . . . . she sank to the ground. . . . They lifted her and bore her away.

The soldiers took Hirschel under the arms. Then I understood why they had laughed at the Jew while Sara and I had run in from the camp. He really was ridiculous, in spite of all the horror of his situation. The torturing anguish of parting from life, from his daughter, from his family was expressed in the case of the unhappy Jew by such strange, hideous contortions of body, by such shrieks and skips, that we all smiled involuntarily, although it was painful, very painful to us. The poor man was expiring with terror. . . .

"Óï, óï, óï!"—he screamed:—"óï . . . . stop! I will tell . . . I will tell much. Mr. Assistant Quartermaster, you know me. I am an agent, an honest agent. Don't seize me; wait a minute more, one little minute, one tiny little minute—wait! Let me go: I am a poor Jew. Sara . . . . where is Sara? Oh, I know! She is with the Mr. Quarter-Lieutenant" (heaven knows why he promoted me to such an unheard-of rank). "Mr. Quarter-Lieutenant! I won't leave the tent!"

(The soldiers tried to take hold of Hirschel . . . he squealed in a deafening manner, and slipped through their hands.)—"Your Excellency! . . . have mercy on an unhappy father of a family! I will give you ten ducats, fifteen ducats, your Excellency! . . ." (They dragged him to the birch-tree) . . . . "Spare me! zhow merzy! Mr. Quarter-Lieutenant! Your Illustriousness! Mr. Over-General and Commander-in-Chief!"

They placed the noose on the Jew's neck . . . . I shut my eyes and set off on a run.

I sat under arrest for a fortnight. I was told that the widow of the unlucky Hirschel had come for the clothing of the dead man. The General ordered one hundred rubles to be given to her. I never saw Sara again. I was wounded; I was sent to the hospital, and when I recovered, Dantzig had already surrendered,—and I overtook my regiment on the banks of the Rhine.

ANDRÉI KÓLOSOFF

(1844)

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IN a small, passably-well furnished room, several young men were sitting in front of the fireplace. The winter evening was only just beginning: the samovár was boiling on the table; conversation had got well under way, and was passing from one topic to another. They had begun to talk about remarkable people, and about the precise manner in which they differ from ordinary people. Each one expressed his opinion as best he might; voices were raised, and had begun to grow noisy. One small, pale man, who had listened for a long time, as he sipped his tea and smoked his small cigar, to the idle chatter of his companions, suddenly rose to his feet and addressed all of us (I also was among the number of the disputants) in the following words:

"Gentlemen! all your profound speeches are good in their way, but futile. Each, as usual, learns the opinion of his opponent, and each one sticks to his own conviction. But this is not the first time we have come together, this is not the first time we have had a discussion, and, therefore, in all probability, we have all managed to

enunciate our views, and to find out the opinions of the others. Then what are you making such a fuss about?"

So saying, the small man carelessly knocked the ashes from his cigar into the fireplace, screwed up his eyes, and smiled calmly. We all fell silent.

"Then what ought we to do, in your opinion?" —said one of us:—"play cards? go to bed? disperse to our homes?"

"It is pleasant to play cards, and useful to sleep,"—retorted the small man:—"but it is still rather early to disperse to our homes. But you have not understood me. Hearken: I propose that each one of us, things being as they are, should describe to us some extraordinary individual, should narrate to us his encounter with some notable man. Believe me, the very worst story is far more to the point than the most capital argument."

We reflected.

"It is strange,"—remarked one of us, a great joker,—"that, with the exception of myself, I am not acquainted with a single remarkable man, and my life is well known to all of you, I believe. However, if you command. . . ."

"No,"—exclaimed another:—"we don't want that! But come,"—he added, addressing the small man:—"do thou begin. Thou hast disconcerted us all; thou art the most competent

person. Only, look out—if thy story does not please us, we shall hiss thee."

"All right,"—he replied.

He took up his stand by the fireplace; we seated ourselves around him, and became quiet. The small man looked at all of us, cast a glance at the ceiling, and began as follows:

TEN years ago, my dear sirs, I was a student in Moscow. My father, a virtuous landed proprietor of the steppes, put me in the hands of a retired German professor, who undertook, for a consideration of one hundred rubles a month, to provide me with food and drink, and to look after my morals. This German was gifted with an extremely pompous and stately mien; at first I was a good deal afraid of him. But one fine evening, on returning home, to my inexpressible delight I beheld my tutor sitting with three or four comrades at a round table, on which stood a considerable number of empty bottles and half-emptied glasses. On catching sight of me, my respected tutor rose and, with flourishing of the hands and hiccoughs, presented me to the honourable company, which immediately and unanimously offered me a glass of punch. This agreeable spectacle had a refreshing effect on my soul; my future presented itself to me in the most attractive shape. And, in fact, thenceforward, beginning with that memorable day, I enjoyed un-

limited liberty, and did pretty much everything except thrash my tutor. He had a wife, who eternally reeked of smoke and cucumber brine; she was still fairly young, but no longer had a single front tooth. It is a well-known fact that all German women speedily lose that indispensable adornment of the human body. I mention her solely because she fell passionately in love with me, and stuffed me so with food that I nearly died.

"Come to the point, come to the point!"—we all shouted.—"Surely, thou dost not intend to narrate to us thine own adventures?"

"No, gentlemen!"—replied the small man with composure:—"I am an ordinary mortal."

So, as I was saying, I lived with my German like a fighting-cock, as the saying is. I did not attend the university too diligently, and at home did absolutely nothing. In a very short time I had made the acquaintance of all my comrades, and called them all "thou." Among the number of my new friends was one, a tolerably nice, good young fellow, the son of a former police captain. His name was Bóboff. This Bóboff got into the habit of coming to see me and, apparently, took a liking to me. And I . . . you know, did not exactly like him, or yet exactly dislike him, only in a sort of way. . . . I must tell you, that in all

Moscow I had not a single relation, with the exception of an old uncle, who sometimes asked me for money. I went nowhere, and was particularly afraid of women; I also avoided the acquaintance of the relations of my university comrades, after one of those relations had pulled his son's hair in my presence because a button had got ripped off his uniform, while there were not more than six buttons on my coat that day. In comparison with many of my comrades I passed for a rich man; from time to time my father sent me small packages of faded blue bank-bills,[1] and therefore I not only enjoyed independence, but I always had flatterers and toadies .... what am I saying? I had? Why, even my bob-tailed dog Armíshka, which, in spite of its setter pedigree, was so afraid of a shot that the mere sight of a gun inspired it with indescribable melancholy—even Armíshka had them! Moreover I, like every other young man, was not exempt from that dull, internal ferment which generally, after having broken out in a dozen more or less crude poems, comes to a very safe and peaceable end. I wanted something, strove toward something, and dreamed of something; I admit that I did not know very clearly at the time precisely of what I was dreaming. Now I understand what I missed:—I felt my loneliness, I *thirsted* for intercourse with so-called live people; the word

[1] The old five-ruble note was blue.—TRANSLATOR.

"life" (pronounce it *laife*) resounded in my soul, and I listened to that sound with ill-defined distress. . . .

"Valerián Nikítitch, please give me a cigar."[1]

Having lighted his cigar, the small man continued:

One fine morning, Bóboff rushed panting to me:—"Great news, brother, dost thou know it? Kólosoff has arrived."—"Kólosoff? what sort of a bird is Mr. Kólosoff?"—"Dost not thou know him? Andriúsha Kólosoff? Come on, my dear fellow, let 's go to him as quickly as possible. He returned yesterday evening from an engagement as tutor in a private family."—"But who is he?"—"A remarkable man, my dear fellow, good gracious!"—"A remarkable man,"—said I:—"thou mayest go alone. I 'll stay at home. I know all about your remarkable men! Some half-inebriated rhymster with an eternal rapturous smile!" . . . . —"Eh, no! Kólosoff is not that sort of a man." I wanted to remark to Bóboff that Mr. Kólosoff ought to call upon me; but, I know not why, I obeyed Bóboff and went. Bóboff conducted me to one of the filthiest, crookedest, and narrowest alleys in Moscow. . . . The house in which Kólosoff lived was built after an ancient pattern, artfully and inconve-

[1] A *pakhitós*, or cigar, with a corn-shuck wrapper.—TRANSLATOR.

niently. We entered the courtyard; a fat woman was hanging out clothes on a line stretched from the house to the fence . . . . children were shouting to one another on the wooden staircase. . . .

"Come to the point! come to the point!"—we roared.

"I see, gentlemen, that you do not like the agreeable, and cling exclusively to the useful. All right!"

We made our way through a dark and narrow passage to Kólosoff's chamber; we entered. You have, probably, an approximate idea of what the room of a poor student is like. Directly in front of the door, on a chest of drawers, sat Kólosoff, smoking a pipe. He extended his hand to Bóboff in friendly wise, and bowed politely to me. I glanced at Kólosoff, and at once felt irresistibly attracted to him. Gentlemen! Bóboff was not mistaken: Kólosoff really was a remarkable man. Allow me to describe him to you somewhat more in detail. . . . He was rather tall of stature, well built, alert, and very far from uncomely. His face . . . . I find it very difficult, gentlemen, to describe any one's face. It is easy enough to enumerate all the separate features; but how impart to another person that which constitutes the distinguishing attribute, the essence, in fact, of *that* face?

"That which Byron calls 'the music of the face,'"—remarked one pale, tightly-girt gentleman.

"Exactly, sir. . . ."

Therefore, I will confine myself to one comment: that peculiar "something," to which I have just alluded, consisted, in Kólosoff's case, of a recklessly jovial and dashing expression of countenance, and of an extremely fascinating smile. He had no recollection of his parents; he had been reared in the most economical way in the house of some distant relation, who was turned out of the government service for taking bribes. Until the age of fifteen he had lived in the country; then Fate brought him to Moscow, to the house of a deaf old priest's widow. He remained with her two years, entered the university, and began to live by giving lessons. He taught history, geography, and Russian grammar, although he had but a faint conception of those sciences; but, in the first place, we have instituted in Russia "guides," which are very useful for teachers, and, in the second place, the requirements of the respected merchants, who entrusted the education of their children to Kólosoff, were too circumscribed.

Kólosoff was neither a wit nor a humorist; but you cannot imagine, gentlemen, how willingly we all obeyed that man. We involuntarily ad-

mired him, as it were; his words, his glances, his movements exhaled such youthful charm that all of his comrades were over head and ears in love with him. The professors regarded him as a far from stupid young fellow, but "not possessed of great capacity," and lazy. Kólosoff's presence lent special orderliness to our evening gatherings: in his presence our merriment never passed over into outrageous turbulence; if we had all grown sad, that half-childish sadness was dissipated, in his presence, in a quiet, sometimes quite practical conversation, and never became converted into spleen. You smile, gentlemen,—I understand your smile: it is a fact that, later on, many of us turned out decidedly commonplace persons. But youth .... youth ....

"O talk not to me of a name great in story!
The days of our youth are the days of our glory. . . ."

remarked the pale man who had spoken before.

"Devil take it, what a memory you have! and you always quote from Byron!"—remarked the narrator.

In a word, gentlemen, Kólosoff was the soul of our society. I became more strongly attached to him than I have ever since been to any woman. And yet, I am not ashamed, even now, to recall that strange love—precisely that, love,—because, as I remember, I experienced

at that time all the torments of that passion—jealousy, for instance. Kólosoff loved us all equally, but he favoured in particular a taciturn, fair-haired, submissive young fellow, Gavríloff by name. He was hardly ever parted from that Gavríloff; he frequently exchanged whispers with him, and in company with him used to disappear from Moscow, God knows whither, for two or three days at a time. . . . Kólosoff did not like to be questioned, and I lost myself in conjectures. It was not simple curiosity which agitated me; I wanted to become Kólosoff's comrade, his squire; I was jealous of Gavríloff; I envied him. I could not possibly explain to myself the cause of Kólosoff's strange absences. Yet he had none of that mystery about him whereon youths endowed with self-conceit, pallor, black hair, and an " expressive " glance are wont to plume themselves, nor any of that fictitious indifference, beneath which vast powers are supposed to be concealed; no: he was entirely above-board, as the saying is; but when passion took possession of him, a vehement, impetuous activity made its appearance. Only, he did not waste his strength in vain; never, under any circumstances whatever, became stilted. By the way, gentlemen . . . . tell the truth: has it not happened to you to sit and smoke your pipe with a mournfully-majestic aspect, as though you had just decided upon some grand feat, while you are sim-

ply revolving in your mind what colour your new trousers shall be? . . . . But the point is, that I was the first to observe in the cheery and cordial Kólosoff these involuntary, passionate impulses. . . . Not without cause is it said that love is penetrating. I made up my mind—cost what it might—to worm myself into his confidence. I had no object in dangling after Kólosoff; I worshipped him in so childish a manner that he could not cherish any doubt as to my devotion . . . . but, to my indescribable vexation, I was forced at last to the conviction that Kólosoff avoided more intimate relations with me, that he found my unsolicited affection oppressive. On one occasion, with obvious displeasure, he asked me to lend him some money—and on the following day he repaid it with derisive gratitude. During the course of the entire winter, my relations with Kólosoff did not undergo so much as a hair's-breadth of change; I often compared myself with Gavríloff—and could not understand how he was better than I. . . . . But all of a sudden everything was changed. In the middle of April Gavríloff fell ill and died in the arms of Kólosoff, who had not left his chamber for a single instant, and went nowhere for a whole week after his death. We all grieved for poor Gavríloff. That pale, taciturn man seemed to have had a presentiment of his end. I, also, sincerely regretted his loss, but

my heart sank within me, and waited for something. . . . On one never-to-be-forgotten evening . . . . I was lying alone on my divan and staring senselessly at the ceiling . . . . when some one hastily threw open the door of my room and halted on the threshold; I raised my head: before me stood Kólosoff. He entered slowly and sat down beside me.—" I have come to thee," —he began, in a decidedly dull voice, " because thou lovest me more than all the others. . . . I have lost my best friend "—his voice trembled slightly—" and I feel lonely. . . . None of you knew Gavríloff . . . . you did not know him." . . . He rose, strode about the room and swiftly approached me. . . . " Wouldst thou like to take his place with me? " he said, and gave me his hand. I sprang to my feet, and flung myself on his breast. My genuine joy touched him. . . . I did not know what to say; I sighed. . . . Kólosoff gazed at me and laughed softly. Tea was served. After tea he began to talk about Gavríloff; I learned that that timid and gentle lad had saved Kólosoff's life; and I was obliged to admit to myself that, had I been in Gavríloff's place, I could not have refrained from chattering —from boasting of my good luck. The clock struck eight. Kólosoff rose, went to the window, drummed on the glass, turned swiftly toward me, tried to say something . . . . and sat down silently on a chair. I took his hand.—" Kólosoff!

really, really, I deserve thy confidence!"—He looked me straight in the eye.—"Well, if that is so," he said at last,—"take thy cap, and let us go."—"Whither?"—"Gavríloff was not wont to ask me."—I instantly fell silent.—"Dost thou know how to play cards?"—"Yes."

We left the house, hired a cab for the *** gate. At the gate we alighted. Kólosoff walked in advance very swiftly; I followed him. We proceeded along the highway. After traversing a verst,[1] Kólosoff turned aside. In the meantime, night had descended. On the right, athwart the mist, the lights twinkled, and the innumerable churches of the great city reared themselves aloft; on the left, by the side of a forest, two white horses were grazing in a meadow; in front of us stretched fields covered with greyish exhalations. I walked in silence behind Kólosoff. Suddenly he halted, extended his hand in front of him, and said: "Yonder is the place to which we are bound." I descried a small, dark house; two tiny windows glimmered faintly through the fog. "In that house," pursued Kólosoff, "dwells a certain Sidorénko, a retired lieutenant, with his sister, an old maid—and his daughter. I will give thee out as my relation—thou wilt sit down and play cards with them." I silently nodded my head. I wanted to prove to Kólosoff that I could hold my tongue quite as

[1] Two thirds of a mile.—TRANSLATOR.

effectually as Gavríloff. . . . But, I must confess, I was powerfully tormented with curiosity. On reaching the porch of the little house, I perceived in the lighted window the graceful form of a young girl. . . . She seemed to be watching for us, and immediately disappeared. We entered a dark, cramped anteroom. A crooked, hunchbacked little old woman emerged to receive us, and stared at me in surprise. "Is Iván Semyónitch at home?" asked Kólosoff. "Yes, sir."—"Yes, I 'm at home!" rang out a thick, masculine voice from the other side of the door. We passed on into the hall,[1] if a long, fairly dirty room can be called a hall, where a tall, ancient piano cowered submissively in a corner near the stove; several chairs were ranged along the walls, which had once been yellow. In the middle of the room stood a man of fifty, tall of stature, stooping, and clad in a greasy dressing-gown. I took a more attentive look at him; his face was surly, his hair was worn in a brush, his forehead was low, he had grey eyes, a huge moustache, thick lips. . . .

"'T is a fine goose!" I said to myself.

"We have n't seen you for a long time, Andréi Nikoláitch," he said, stretching out to Kólosoff his hideous red hand—"for a long time! And where is Sevastyán Sevastyánovitch?"

[1] A "hall" in Russian houses is a combination music- and ball-room, which is also sometimes used as a dining-room, and a play-room in bad weather.—TRANSLATOR.

"Gavríloff is dead," answered Kólosoff, sadly.

"Dead! just think of that! And who is this?"

"A relation of mine—I have the honour to introduce him:—Nikolái Alex. . . . ."

"Good, good," Iván Semyónitch interrupted him:—"I 'm glad, very glad to make his acquaintance. And does he play cards?"

"Yes, of course he does!"

"Well, that 's fine; we 'll sit down at once. Hey, there! Matryóna Semyónovna—where art thou? Fetch the card-table—and be quick about it! . . . . And tea!"

With these words, Mr. Sidorénko went into the next room. Kólosoff looked at me.—"Hearken," said he: "God knows how ashamed I am!" . . . . I shut his mouth with my hand.

"Well, my dear fellow—what 's your name?—please come hither," shouted Iván Semyónitch. I went into the drawing-room. It was even smaller than the dining-room. On the walls hung some hideous portraits; in front of the divan, from which the shredded linden-bast stuffing projected in several places, stood a green table; on the divan sat Iván Semyónitch, already engaged in shuffling the cards; by his side, on the extreme edge of an arm-chair, sat a raw-boned woman in a white mob-cap and a black gown, with a sallow, wrinkled face, tiny blear eyes, and thin, cat-like lips.

"Here,"—said Iván Semyónitch, "let me introduce this man! the former one is dead; Andréi Nikoláitch has brought another; let us see how he plays!"—The old woman made an awkward bow, and indulged in a fit of coughing. I cast a glance about me; Kólosoff was no longer in the room.—"Stop that coughing, Matryóna Semyónovna—sheep cough,"—growled Sidorénko. I sat down; the game began. Mr. Sidorénko flew into a frightful passion and raged at the smallest mistake on my part; he showered reproaches on his sister; but she, evidently, had succeeded in getting used to her brother's amiable remarks, and merely blinked her eyes. When, however, he declared to Matryóna Semyónovna that she was "antichrist" the poor old woman flared up.

"You were the death of your spouse, Anfísa Kárpovna, Iván Semyónitch," she said angrily; "but you sha'n't be the death of me!"

"You don't say so?"

"No; you sha'n't!"

"You don't say so?"

"No; you sha'n't be the death of me!"

They continued to wrangle after this fashion for quite a long time. My position, as you will please to observe, was not only not enviable, but even simply stupid; I did not understand why Kólosoff had taken it into his head to bring me. . . . . I had never been a good player; but on

this occasion I was conscious that I was so bad as to be beneath criticism.

"No!" the retired lieutenant kept incessantly repeating:—"you are far inferior to Sevastyánitch! No, you are playing heedlessly!"—Of course, I inwardly consigned him to all the fiends. This torture lasted for two hours; they stripped me of every kopék. Just before the end of the last rubber, I heard a faint sound behind my chair,—glanced round, and beheld Kólosoff; by his side stood a young girl of seventeen, gazing at me with a barely perceptible smile.—"Fill my pipe, Várya,"—said Iván Semyónitch. The girl immediately fluttered off into the next room. She was not very pretty, was quite pale and thin; but neither before nor since have I ever seen such eyes or such hair. We played the rubber out, after a fashion; I paid up. Sidorénko lighted his pipe, and roared:

"Well, now 't is time to sup!"

Kólosoff presented me to Várya, that is, to Varvára Ivánovna, the daughter of Iván Semyónitch. Várya was embarrassed; and I was embarrassed. But Kólosoff, according to his wont, brought everything and everybody into order in a few moments: he seated Várya at the piano, requested her to play a dance-tune, and began to vie with Iván Semyónitch in executing a kazák dance. The lieutenant shouted, stamped, and executed with his feet such incredible steps

that Matryóna Semyónovna herself shrieked with laughter, and went off to her own room upstairs. The hunchbacked woman set the table; we sat down to supper. After supper, Kólosoff narrated various nonsensical things; the lieutenant laughed deafeningly; I surveyed Várya from the corners of my eyes. She never took her eyes from Kólosoff . . . . and merely from the expression of her face I was able to divine that she loved him, and was beloved by him. Her lips were slightly parted, her head drooped slightly forward, a faint blush played over her whole countenance; from time to time she heaved a profound sigh, suddenly dropped her eyes, and laughed softly. . . . I rejoiced for Kólosoff. . . . And yet I was envious, devil take it! . . . . After supper, Kólosoff and I immediately took our caps, which, however, did not in the least prevent the lieutenant's saying to us, yawning the while:—"You have stayed too long, gentlemen; 't is time for you to cease abusing our kindness." Várya escorted Kólosoff to the anteroom.—"When will you come again, Andréi Nikoláevitch?" she whispered to him.

"A few days hence, without fail."

"Bring him too," she added, with a very artful smile.

"Certainly, certainly. . . . ."

"No, I thank you!" I said to myself. . . .

On our way home, I learned the following.

Six months previously, Kólosoff had made the acquaintance of Mr. Sidorénko in a decidedly strange manner. One rainy evening, Kólosoff was returning home from hunting, and was already nearing the *** gate, when suddenly, at a short distance from the road, he heard groans, interspersed with oaths. He had his gun with him: without pausing long to reflect, he bent his steps straight toward the shouts, and found on the ground a man with a sprained ankle. This man was Mr. Sidorénko. With great difficulty he led him home, and entrusted him to the care of his frightened sister and daughter, then ran for a doctor. . . . In the meanwhile, morning had come; Kólosoff could hardly stand on his feet from fatigue. With the permission of Matryóna Semyónovna, he threw himself on the divan in the drawing-room, and slept until eight o'clock. On awakening, he wished to set off homeward immediately; but they detained him, and gave him tea. During the night he had succeeded in catching two fleeting glimpses of Varvára Ivánovna's pale little face; he paid no special attention to her, but in the morning he took a decided liking to her. Matryóna Semyónovna loquaciously lauded and thanked Kólosoff; Várya sat silent, pouring out the tea, rarely cast a glance at him, and handed him now a cup, now the cream, now the sugar-bowl, with timid and bashful attentiveness. At that time the lieutenant

awoke, in a loud voice demanded his pipe, and after having held his peace for a while, began to shout: "Sister! hey, there, sister!" Matryóna went to him in his bedroom.—"Well, has that fellow . . . . what 's his name? the devil only knows! —has he gone?"—"No, I am still here," replied Kólosoff, stepping to the door:—"are you better now?"—"Yes," replied the lieutenant:—"come here, my dear fellow." Kólosoff entered. Sidorénko stared at him, and said reluctantly: "Well, thanks; drop in and see me some time or other—what 's your name, damn it?"—"Kólosoff," replied Andréi.—"Well, good, good, drop in; and now there 's no use in your hanging on here; they 're expecting you at home, I suppose."—Kólosoff left the room, took leave of Matryóna Semyónovna, made his bow to Varvára Ivánovna, and returned home. From that day forth he began to go to Iván Semyónitch's house; at first rarely, then more and more frequently. The summer arrived: he would take his gun, put on his game-bag, and set off as though for the chase; he would drop in to see the retired lieutenant—and sit there until evening.

Varvára Ivánovna's father had served for five-and-twenty years in the army, had accumulated a little money, and bought himself a few desyatínas [1] of land a couple of versts from Moscow. He was barely able to read and write; but,

[1] A desyatína equals 2.70 acres.—Translator.

despite his outward clumsiness and coarseness, he was intelligent and crafty, and even somewhat of a knave at times, like many Little Russians. He was a frightful egoist, stubborn as a bull, and, taken as a whole, far from amiable, especially with strangers; I even had occasion to note in him something akin to scorn for the whole human race. He denied himself nothing, like a spoiled child, did not care a rap for anybody, and lived "at his ease." He and I once fell into conversation about marriages in general. "Marriage . . . . marriage," said he:—"well, to whom shall I marry my girl, damn it? well, and what for? That her mean little husband may beat her, as I used to beat my deceased wife? And then, what do I make by it?" Such was retired lieutenant Iván Semyónitch. Kólosoff frequented his house, not on his account, of course, but for the sake of his daughter. One fine evening, Andréi was sitting in the garden with her, and chatting about something or other. Iván Semyónitch approached them, cast a glum look at Várya, and called Andréi to one side. "Hearken, my good fellow," he said to him, "I perceive that thou findest it agreeable to chatter with my only-begotten; but it is dull for me, the old man. Just bring some one with thee, otherwise I shall have no one with whom to toss the cards about; dost hear me? I won't admit thee if thou comest alone." On the following day Kólosoff presented

himself with Gavríloff, and poor Sevastyán Sevastyánitch played cards every evening during the autumn and winter with the retired lieutenant; and that worthy man treated him without ceremony, as the saying is; in other words, very roughly. And now, gentlemen, you have probably comprehended why Kólosoff, after Gavríloff's death, took me with him to Iván Semyónitch's. Having communicated to me these particulars, Kólosoff added: "I love Várya; she is a very charming girl; she has taken a liking to thee."

I think I have forgotten to inform you, my dear sirs, that up to that time I had been afraid of women and had shunned them, although it did happen that when I was alone I dreamed for hours at a time of trysts, of love, of mutual love, and so forth. Varvára Ivánovna was the first young girl with whom necessity had forced me to speak,—precisely that, necessity. Várya was an ordinary girl,—and yet, there are very few such girls in holy Russia. You ask me, "Why?" Because I never observed in her anything stiff, unnatural, affected; because she was a simple, frank, somewhat melancholy creature; because she could not be called "a young lady." I liked her quiet smile; I liked her artlessly-ringing voice, her light and merry laugh, her intent, though not in the least "profound" glances. This child promised nothing; but you involun-

tarily admired her, as you admired the sudden, soft call of the oriole at evening in the lofty, gloomy birch coppice. I must confess that at any other time I should have passed by such a creature with considerable indifference; I am in no mood now for solitary evening strolls, for orioles; but then . . . . .

Gentlemen, I think that you, like all nice men, have been in love at least once in the course of your lives, and have learned, by personal experience, how love germinates and grows in the human heart; and therefore I will not enlarge overmuch upon what went on within me at that time. Kólosoff and I went quite frequently to Iván Semyónitch's; and, although the accursed cards more than once drove me to utter despair, yet in the mere proximity of the beloved woman (I had fallen in love with Várya), there is a certain strange, sweet, torturing delight. I did not attempt to stifle this dawning sentiment; moreover, when, at last, I made up my mind to call that sentiment by its name, it was already too strong. . . . I silently cherished, and timidly concealed my love. This oppressive fermentation of silent passion pleased me. My sufferings deprived me neither of sleep nor of appetite; but for whole days together I felt in my breast that peculiar physical sensation, which arose within me when, for example, Kólosoff returned with Várya from the garden, and her

whole face exhaled rapturous devotion, and languor from excess of bliss. . . . She lived his life to such a degree, she was so permeated with him, that she imperceptibly acquired his habits, looked in the same way, laughed in the same way as he. . . . . I can imagine what moments she spent with Andréi, for what felicity she was indebted to him. . . . And he . . . . Kólosoff did not lose his liberty; in her absence, I do not think that he even called her to mind; he was still the same care-free, jolly, and happy man, as we had always known him.

So, as I have already told you, Kólosoff and I went pretty often to Iván Semyónitch's. Sometimes (when he was not in the humour) the retired lieutenant did not set me down to cards; in that case, he would silently slink off to a corner, contract his brows in a frown, and stare at every one like a wolf. The first time I delighted him by my indulgence; but afterward, I would sometimes begin to urge him to sit down to a hand at whist; the rôle of a third person is so unbearable! I embarrassed Kólosoff and Várya so disagreeably, although they assured each other that there was no reason why they should stand on ceremony in my presence! . . .

In the meanwhile, time flowed on and on. . . . . They were happy. . . . I am not fond of describing other people's happiness. But, after a while, I began to notice that Várya's child-

ish rapture was gradually beginning to give way to a more womanly, a more disquieting feeling. I began to surmise that the new tune had begun to tinkle in the old fashion, that is to say, that Kólosoff . . . . was growing . . . . slightly cold. This discovery delighted me, I must admit; I will confess that I did not feel the slightest indignation against Andréi.

The intervals between our visits became longer and longer. . . . Várya began to welcome us with tear-swollen eyes. Reproaches made themselves heard. . . . I would ask Kólosoff, with feigned indifference: "Well, shall we go to Iván Semyónitch's to-day?" . . . . He would stare coldly at me, and say calmly: "No, we shall not." It sometimes seemed to me that he smiled in a wily way when he talked with me about Várya. . . . Altogether, I did not fill Gavríloff's place with him. . . . Gavríloff was a thousand times more good-natured and stupid than I was.

Now permit me a slight digression. In speaking to you about my university comrades, I did not mention a certain Shshtchítoff. This Shshtchítoff was in his six-and-thirtieth year; he had been numbered among the students for ten years already. Even now I behold vividly before me his rather long, pale face, his little brown eyes, his long, aquiline nose with its tip twisted awry, his thin, mocking lips, his pom-

pous crest of hair, his chin, which wallowed in a self-satisfied way in a broad, shabby neckerchief of the hue of the raven's wing, his cuffs with brass buttons, his blue frock-coat worn open on the breast, his motley-hued waistcoat. . . . . I seem to hear his disagreeable, quavering laugh. . . . He ran about everywhere, distinguished himself at every possible sort of a " dancing-class." . . . . I remember that I could not listen without a shudder to his cynical stories. . . . . Kólosoff one day compared him to an unswept room in a Russian eating-house . . . . a frightful comparison! And yet, that man possessed an immense amount of brains, common sense, observation, and sagacity. . . . He sometimes astounded us with some word so practical, so just, so keen, that we all involuntarily fell silent, and stared at him in amazement. But, you know, a Russian man really does n't care in the least whether he has uttered a bit of nonsense or a sensible thing. Shshtchítoff was particularly feared by those conceited, dreamy and incapable striplings who painfully hatch out, after whole days of effort, the most detestable rhymes, read them in drawling tones to their " friends," and despise all positive knowledge. One of these he simply drove out of Moscow by incessantly repeating to him two lines of his own composition:

" Man —
That unflayed skeleton. . . ."

He had rhymed "skeleton" with "man."[1] Yet Shshtchítoff himself did nothing, either, and learned nothing. . . . But that is quite in the usual order of things. Well, so that Shshtchítoff, God knows why, began to jeer at my romantic attachment to Kólosoff. On the first occasion, I consigned him to the devil, with noble indignation; on the second occasion, I informed him, with cold scorn, that he was not capable of judging our friendship—but I did not drive him away; and when, as he took leave of me, he remarked that I did not even dare to praise Kólosoff without the latter's permission, I felt vexed; Shshtchítoff's last words had effected a lodgment in my soul.—For more than two weeks I had not seen Várya. . . . Pride, love, confused anticipation—a multitude of different emotions were stirring within me. . . . I waved my hand in despair, and with a frightful sinking at the heart, I set off alone to Iván Semyónitch's.

I know not how I made my way to the familiar little house; I remember that I sat down several times to rest on the road—not from fatigue, but from emotion. I entered the anteroom, and before I had managed to utter a single word the door from the hall flew open, and Várya ran out to meet me.

"At last!"—she said in a trembling voice;—"but where is Andréi Nikoláevitch?"

[1] Skeleton—*skelét*; man—*tchelovyék*.—Translator.

" Kólosoff has not come . . . ." I muttered with an effort.

" He has not come! "—she repeated.

" Yes . . . he bade me say to you that . . . . he was detained. . . ." I positively did not know myself what I was saying, and dared not lift my eyes. Várya stood motionless and silent before me. I darted a glance at her; she had turned her head aside; two large tears were rolling slowly down her cheeks. In the expression of her face there was so much sudden, bitter grief, the conflict between modesty, distress, and confidence in me was so touchingly depicted in the involuntary movement of her poor little head, that my heart sank within me. I advanced a little . . . . she shuddered swiftly and ran away. In the hall Iván Semyónitch met me.

" What 's the meaning of this, my dear fellow? Are you alone, sir? " he asked me, screwing up his left eye strangely.

" I am, sir," I replied in confusion.

Sidorénko suddenly burst into a guffaw, and retreated into the adjoining room. Never before had I found myself in so utterly stupid a situation,—the devil knows how hateful it was! But there was no help for it. I began to pace back and forth in the hall.—" What was that fat boar laughing at? "—I thought.

Matryóna Semyónovna emerged into the hall with a stocking in her hands, and seated her-

self by the little window. I began to chat with her.

In the meantime tea was served. Várya came down-stairs, pale and sorrowful. The retired lieutenant jested about Kólosoff.

"I know,"—said he, "what sort of a goose he is: now, I suppose, you could n't lure him hither even with a kalátch!" [1]

Várya hastily rose and withdrew. Iván Semyónitch gazed after her, whistling roguishly the while. I cast an angry glance at him.—"Can it be,"—I thought, "that he knows all?" And the lieutenant, as though divining my thoughts, nodded his head affirmatively.

Immediately after tea I rose and took my leave. —"We shall see you again, my dear fellow," remarked the lieutenant. I did not say a single word in reply. . . . I had simply begun to be afraid of that man.

On the porch some one's cold, trembling hand clasped my hand; I glanced round: it was Várya.

"I must speak with you," she whispered.— "Come as early as possible to-morrow, straight to the garden. Papa takes a nap after dinner; no one will disturb us."

I pressed her hand in silence, and we parted.

On the following day, at three o'clock in the

[1] A peculiarly delicious wheaten roll, which is made with particular skill in Moscow.—TRANSLATOR.

afternoon, I was already in Iván Semyónitch's garden. I had not seen Kólosoff that morning, although he had dropped in to call. It was an autumn day, grey, but tranquil and warm. The slender yellow blades of grass swayed mournfully over the faded lawn; alert tomtits were hopping over the naked, dark-brown branches of the hickory-tree; belated larks were running hurriedly along the paths somewhere; a hare was cautiously making his way through the vegetables; the herd was roaming idly over the stubble-field. I found Várya in the garden, under an apple-tree, seated on a bench; she wore a dark, somewhat rumpled gown; unfeigned grief was expressed in her weary glance, and in her carelessly-arranged hair.

I sat down by her side. Both of us maintained silence. For a long time she twirled in her hands some flower or other, then bent her head, and said:

"Andréi Nikoláevitch. . . ."

I immediately observed from the movement of her lips that she was preparing to weep, and I began to comfort her, to assure her fervently of Andréi's devotion. . . . She heard me out, shook her head sorrowfully, uttered unintelligible words, and immediately relapsed into silence, but did not weep. The first moments, which I had dreaded most of all, passed off quite successfully. Gradually, she began to talk about Andréi.

"I know he no longer loves me now,"—she kept repeating: "God bless him! I cannot think how I am to live without him. . . . I do not sleep at night, I weep continually. . . . But what am I to do? . . . . What am I to do?" . . . . Her eyes filled with tears. "He seemed so good to me . . . . and now . . . ."

Várya wiped away her tears, coughed, and drew herself up.

"It does not seem so very long," she went on, "since he read to me out of Púshkin, since he sat with me on this bench. . . ."

Várya's ingenuous chatter touched me; I listened in silence to her avowal; my soul slowly became imbued with a bitter, torturing felicity; I never took my eyes from that pale face, from those long, wet eyelashes, from those half-parted, slightly-parched lips. . . . And yet, I felt . . . . Would you like to listen to a brief psychological analysis of my sentiments at that moment? In the first place, I was tormented by the thought that I was not beloved, that it was not I who was causing Várya to suffer; in the second place, I was delighted by her confidence; I knew that she would be grateful for my having furnished her the possibility of putting her grief into words; in the third place, I inwardly registered a vow to bring Kólosoff and Várya together again, and the consciousness of my magnanimity comforted me . . . . in the fourth place, I hoped by my self-

sacrifice to touch Várya's heart—and then . . . . you see, I do not spare myself; thank God, it is time! But now, the clock on the belfry of the *** monastery struck five; evening was swiftly drawing on. Várya hastily rose to her feet, thrust into my hand a tiny note, and went toward the house. I overtook her, promised her to bring Andréi, and darted swiftly, as though I were a happy lover, through the wicket-gate into the fields. On the note, in uncertain chirography, were inscribed the words: "To my dear sir, Andréi Nikoláevitch."

Early on the morning of the following day, I set out for Kólosoff. I must confess that, although I had assured myself that my intentions were not only noble, but even, as a whole, filled with magnanimous self-sacrifice, I nevertheless was conscious of a certain awkwardness, even of timidity. Sitting with him was a certain Puzyrítzyn, a student who had failed to pass his examinations, one of the composers of romances known under the name of "Moscow" or "popular."[1] Puzyrítzyn was an extremely good-natured and timid man, and was eternally making ready to enter the hussars, in spite of his three-and-thirty years. He belonged to the category of people who find it unavoidably necessary to give utterance once every twenty-four hours

[1] Literally, *grey*, which is one appellation for the common people.—TRANSLATOR.

to some such phrase as, "all the most beautiful things perish at the moment of their sumptuous blossoming,—such is the fate of the beautiful in this world," so that, during all the rest of the day, they may with befitting agreeability smoke a pipe in the circle of their "good comrades." For that reason, also, he was called an idealist. So then, this Puzyrítzyn was sitting with Kólosoff, and reading to him some "fragment." I set to listening: the question concerned a young man who loves a girl, murders her, and so forth. At last Puzyrítzyn came to an end, and went away. His absurd composition, his rapturously bawling voice, his presence, as a whole, had aroused Kólosoff's jeering irritability. I felt that I had come at a bad time, but there was no help for it; without any prefatory remarks, I handed Várya's note to Andréi.

Kólosoff stared at me in amazement, broke the seal of the note, ran his eyes over it, and preserved silence for a while, smiling composedly. —"Well, now!"—he ejaculated at last.—"So thou hast been to Iván Semyónitch's?"

"Yes, I was there alone yesterday evening,"—I replied abruptly and decisively.

"Ah!"—remarked Kólosoff with a sneer, and lighted his pipe.

"Andréi,"—I said to him,—"art not thou sorry for her? . . . If thou couldst but have seen her tears. . . ." And I began eloquently to de-

scribe my visit of the preceding day. I really was much affected.

Kólosoff maintained silence, and smoked his pipe.

"Didst thou sit with her under the apple-tree in the garden?"—he said at last. "I remember that in May I sat with her on that same bench. . . . . The apple-tree was in blossom; now and then the fresh, white flowers fell on us; I held both of Várya's hands . . . . we were happy then. . . . Now the apple-tree is out of bloom, and the apples on it are sour."

I flared up with noble indignation, and began to upbraid Andréi for his coldness, his cruelty; I began to argue with him that he had no right to abandon so suddenly a young girl in whom he had aroused a multitude of new impressions; I entreated him at least to go and take leave of Várya. Kólosoff listened to me until I had finished.

"Let us assume,"—he said to me, when, agitated and weary, I flung myself into an easy-chair:—"let us assume that it is permissible for thee, as my friend, to condemn me. . . . But listen now to my justification, although . . . ."

Here he paused awhile, and smiled strangely.

"Várya is a very fine girl,"—he continued, "and is guilty of no wrong whatsoever toward me. . . . On the contrary I am indebted to her for a very great deal. I have ceased to visit her

for a very simple reason—I have ceased to love her. . . ."

"But why? but why?"—I interrupted him.

"God knows why. So long as I loved her, I belonged wholly to her; I did not think of the future, and shared everything, my whole life with her . . . . now that passion has died out in me. . . . What then? dost thou bid me dissimulate, pretend to be in love, pray? And why? Out of pity for her? If she is an honest girl, she herself will not desire such alms, but if she is glad to console herself with my . . . . sympathy, the devil 's in her!"

Kólosoff's heedlessly sharp expressions offended me, possibly all the more because I was secretly in love with the woman in question. . . . I flared up.

"Enough,"—I said to him:—"stop that! I know why thou hast ceased to visit Várya."

"Why is it?"

"Tániusha has forbidden thee." In uttering these words, I fancied that I had violently offended Andréi. This Tániusha was an extremely "light" young lady, black-haired and swarthy, aged five-and-twenty, as free and easy and as clever as the devil, a Shshtchítoff in female garb. Kólosoff quarrelled with her and made peace with her five times a month. She loved him passionately, although at times, when they were estranged, she vowed and swore that she

thirsted for his blood . . . . and Andréi could not get along without her. Kólosoff looked at me and calmly remarked: "Perhaps."

"It is not 'perhaps,' but certainly!" I yelled.

At last my reproaches bored Kólosoff. . . . He rose and put on his cap.

"Whither away?"

"For a stroll; you and Puzyrítzyn have given me a headache."

"Art thou angry with me?"

"No," he answered, with his charming smile, and offered me his hand.

"At any rate, what dost thou bid me say to Várya?"

"What?" . . . . He pondered for a while.

"She told thee," he said,—"that she and I had read Púshkin together. . . . Remind her of one of Púshkin's verses."

"Of which one?" I asked impatiently.

"Why, of this one:

'That which has been shall never be again.'"

With these words he left the room. I followed him; on the stairs he paused.

"And is she greatly grieved?" he asked me, pulling his cap down over his eyes.

"Yes, very greatly!" . . .

"Poor girl! Do thou console her, Nikolái; for thou lovest her."

"Yes, I have become attached to her, of course. . . ."

"Thou lovest her,"—repeated Kólosoff, looking me straight in the eye. I turned away in silence; we parted.

On reaching home, I was, as it were, in a fever.

"I have fulfilled my duty," I thought; "I have conquered my own self-love; I have advised Andréi to make up with Várya!! . . Now I have rights: he that will not when he may, when he would he shall have nay." Nevertheless, Andréi's indifference wounded me. He was not jealous of me, he had ordered me to console her. . . . "But is Várya such an ordinary girl? . . . . Is she not worthy even of compassion? . . . . People will be found who will understand how to prize that which you despise, Andréi Nikoláitch! . . . . But what 's the use? Surely, she does not love me. . . . Yes, she does not love me now; up to this time she has not utterly lost hope that Kólosoff will return. . . . But later on . . . . who knows? my devotion will touch her, I shall renounce all claims. . . . I shall give her the whole of myself, irrevocably. . . . Várya! is it possible that thou wilt not come to love me . . . never? . . . . never? . . ."

That was the sort of speeches which your humble servant uttered in the capital city Moscow, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-three, in the house of his respected tutor.

I wept . . . . I languished. . . . The weather was atrocious . . . a fine, drizzling rain streamed with a thin, persistent squeak down the window-panes; damp, dark-grey clouds hung motionlessly over the town. I dined in haste, made no reply to the anxious queries of the good-natured German woman, who began to whimper herself at the sight of my red, swollen eyes (German women—as everybody knows—are always ready to cry); I behaved in a very ruthless manner to my tutor . . . . and immediately after dinner, I set off for Iván Semyónitch's house. . . . Having asserted my sovereign mastery over a shaky, wretched little drozhky, I asked myself: "What now? Shall I tell Várya everything, just as it is, or shall I continue to be wily, and wean her, little by little, from Andréi?" . . . . I drove to Iván Semyónitch's house, and still did not know what to decide upon. . . . I found the whole family in the hall. Várya turned frightfully pale when she saw me, but did not stir from her place; Sidorénko began to talk to me in a peculiarly jeering sort of manner. I answered him as best I could, from time to time darting a glance at Várya, and almost unconsciously imparted to my countenance a dejectedly pensive expression. Again the lieutenant made up a whist-party. Várya seated herself near the window, and did not move.

"Thou art bored now, I suppose?"—Iván

Semyónitch asked her a score of times. At last I succeeded in snatching a suitable moment.

"You are alone again," Várya whispered to me.

"Yes," I replied gloomily:—"and, in all probability, for a long time."

She swiftly dropped her head.

"Did you give him my note?" she said, in a barely audible voice.

"Yes."

"Well?"

She sighed. I glanced at her. . . . A malicious joy suddenly flashed up within me.

"He bade me tell you," I enunciated, pausing between my words, "'that which has been shall never be again.'"

Várya clutched at her heart with her left hand, extended her right in front of her; her whole form swayed, and she hastily left the room. I started to run after her. . . . Iván Semyónitch stopped me. I remained another half hour with him, but Várya did not make her appearance. On my way home, I felt conscience-stricken . . . . conscience-stricken toward Várya, toward Andréi, toward myself. Although, they say, it is better to hew off at one blow a suffering member than to weary a sick person for a long time, yet who had given me the right so ruthlessly to stab the heart of the poor young girl? . . . . For a long time I could not get

to sleep . . . . but fall asleep I did at last. In general, I must repeat, "love" never once has deprived me of my sleep.

I began to visit Iván Semyónitch's house quite frequently: Kólosoff and I met, as before, but neither he nor I mentioned Várya. My relations to her were of a decidedly strange nature. She had become attached to me with that affection which precludes all possibility of love; she could not fail to notice my fervent sympathy, and chatted willingly with me . . . . about what, do you think?—about Kólosoff, about Kólosoff alone! That man had taken possession of her to such a degree that somehow she did not seem to belong to herself. In vain did I try to arouse her pride . . . she either held her peace, or talked, and how!—fairly chattered about Kólosoff! I did not then suspect that grief of that sort, loquacious grief, is, in reality, far more genuine than all silent sufferings. I confess that I lived through many bitter moments during that period. I felt that I was not capable of taking Kólosoff's place; I felt that Várya's past was so full, so beautiful . . . . and the present so poor. . . . . I reached the point where I involuntarily shuddered at the words, "Do you remember?" . . . . with which almost every speech of hers began. She grew rather thin during the first days of our acquaintance . . . . but afterward she recovered her health, and even waxed merry;

at that time, she might have been compared to a little bird which has been wounded, and has not, as yet, fully recovered. In the meantime, my position had become unbearable; the very lowest passions gradually began to take possession of my soul; it even befell that I calumniated Kólosoff in the presence of Várya. I made up my mind to put an end to such unnatural relations. But how? Part from Várya I could not. . . . Declare my love to her I dared not; I felt that I could not, as yet, hope that it would be reciprocated. Marry her. . . . That thought terrified me; I was only eighteen years of age; it seemed terrible to me to " enslave " my whole future so early: I remembered my father, I heard the jeers of my comrade Kólosoff. . . . But, it is said, every thought is like dough; it is worth while to knead it well—and you can make anything out of it. I began to meditate on marriage for whole days at a time. . . . I pictured to myself with what gratitude Várya's heart would be filled to overflowing when I, Kólosoff's comrade and confidant, should offer her my hand, knowing that she was hopelessly in love with another. Experienced people, I recollected, had frequently told me that marrying for love was the most absolute folly; I began to indulge in fancies: I pictured to myself our tranquil life together, somewhere in a warm corner of southern Russia; I mentally watched the gradual transition of Várya's heart

from gratitude to friendship, from friendship to love. . . . I promised myself that I would immediately leave Moscow, and the university, and forget everything and everybody. I began to avoid meeting Kólosoff. At last, on one clear, winter morning (on the evening before Várya had, somehow, peculiarly enchanted me), I dressed myself in my best, emerged slowly and solemnly from my chamber, hired a capital drozhky, and drove to Iván Semyónitch's. Várya was sitting alone in the hall, and reading Karamzín.[1] At sight of me, she softly laid her book on her lap, and with anxious curiosity gazed into my face: I had never been in the habit of going to them in the morning. . . . I seated myself by her side; my heart beat torturingly.

"What are you reading?" I asked at last.

"Karamzín."

"Well? are you interested in Russian . . . ?" She suddenly interrupted me.

"Listen; you do not come from Andréi, do you?"

That name, the tremulous, questioning voice, the all-joyful, half-timid expression of her face, all those indubitable tokens of living love sank into my soul like arrows. I made up my mind either to part from Várya, or to receive from her herself the right forever to banish from her lips

[1] The famous historian. He also wrote a number of much-admired sentimental high-strung tales (1765–1826).—Translator.

the hateful name of Andréi. I do not remember what I said to her then; at first I must have expressed myself somewhat obscurely, because she did not understand me for a long time; at last, I could endure it no longer, and I almost shrieked: "I love you, and I want to marry you."

"You love me?" said Várya, in amazement.

It seemed to me that she wanted to rise, to go away, to reject me.

"For God's sake," I whispered panting,— "do not answer me either 'yes' or 'no'; reflect: to-morrow I will return for a decisive answer. . . . I have loved you this long time, I want to be your defender, your friend. Do not answer me now, do not answer. . . . Farewell until to-morrow."

With these words, I rushed out of the room. Iván Semyónitch met me in the anteroom, and not only was not surprised at my call, but even, with an agreeable smile, offered me an apple. Such an unexpected piece of amiability startled me so that I was fairly petrified.

"Pray, take the apple; 't is a good little apple, really!" repeated Iván Semyónitch. I mechanically took the apple at last and drove home with it.

You can easily imagine how I passed all that day and the following morning. I slept pretty badly that night. "My God! My God!" I thought: "what if she should refuse me! . . . .

I shall perish, ... I shall perish, ..." I kept repeating despondently. "Yes, she will infallibly reject me. . . . And why was I so hasty! ! ". . . . . Being desirous of diverting my mind in some manner, I began to write a letter to my father—a desperate, a decisive letter. In speaking of myself, I used the words "your son." Bóboff dropped in to see me. I began to weep upon his breast, which, probably, surprised Bóboff not a little. . . . I then learned that he had come to me to borrow money (his landlord had threatened to eject him from the house); he had been obliged—speaking in the student language—"to withdraw backward and return. . . ." At last, the great moment arrived. As I emerged from my room, I stopped in the doorway. "With what feelings," I thought, "shall I step across this threshold again?" . . . . My agitation, at the sight of Iván Semyónitch's little house, was so powerful that I alighted from the carriage, got a handful of snow, and eagerly pressed my face to it. "O Lord!" I thought: "if I find Várya alone,—I am lost!" My legs gave way beneath me; I barely managed to mount the porch. My wishes were fulfilled. I found Várya in the drawing-room with Matryóna Semyónovna. I made my bows awkwardly, and seated myself by the old woman. Várya's face was somewhat paler than usual . . . . it seemed to me that she was trying to avoid my glances. . . .

But what was my state of mind when Matryóna Semyónovna suddenly rose, and went into the next room! . . . I began to stare out of the window—I was quivering all over internally like an aspen-leaf. Várya maintained silence. . . . At last I conquered my timidity, stepped up to her, bent my head. . . .

"What have you to say to me?" I enunciated in a dying voice. Várya turned away,—tears sparkled on her eyelashes.

"I see," I went on, "that it is useless for me to hope." . . . . Várya cast a bashful glance around, and silently gave me her hand.

"Várya!" I said involuntarily . . . . and halted, as though frightened at my own hopes.

"Speak to papa," she said at last.

"Do you permit me to speak to Iván Semyónitch?"

"Yes, sir." I showered kisses on her hands.

"Enough, sir; enough, sir," whispered Várya —and suddenly burst into tears. I sat down beside her, soothed her, and wiped away her tears. . . . Luckily, Iván Semyónitch was not at home, and Matryóna Semyónovna had gone off to her little chamber up-stairs. I swore love and fidelity to Várya. . . .

"Yes," she said, repressing her final sobs and incessantly wiping away her tears:—"I know that you are a good man; you are an honourable man; you are not like Kólosoff. . . ."

"Again that name?" . . . . I thought. But with what delight did I kiss those warm, moist little hands! with what quiet joy did I gaze into that sweet face! . . . . I talked to her of the future, I strode about the room, I sat down in front of her on the floor, I covered my eyes with my hand and shuddered. . . . Iván Semyónitch's heavy tread broke off our conversation. Várya rose hastily and went off to her own room—but without pressing my hand or glancing at me. Mr. Sidorénko was still more amiable than he had been on the preceding day: he laughed, rubbed his belly, made jokes at the expense of Matryóna Semyónovna, and so forth. I would have liked to ask his "blessing" on the spot, but changed my mind, and deferred it until the morrow. His ponderous jests bored me; moreover, I felt tired. . . . I took leave of him and drove away.

I belong to the category of people who are fond of meditating on their own sensations, although I cannot endure such people myself. And therefore, after the first outburst of heartfelt joy, I immediately began to surrender myself to various reflections. When I had driven about half a verst from the house of the retired lieutenant, I tossed my cap into the air in excess of rapture, and shouted: "Hurrah!" But while I was wending my way through the long and crooked streets of Moscow, my thoughts gradu-

ally took another turn. Divers decidedly dirty doubts began to bustle about in my soul. I recalled my conversation with Iván Semyónitch about marriage in general . . . . and involuntarily said, in an undertone: "Just think what a hypocrite the old rascal is!" . . . To tell the truth, I kept incessantly reiterating: "But, on the other hand, Várya is mine! mine!" . . . . But, in the first place, that "but"—okh, that *but!*—and, in the second place, the words "Várya is mine!" awakened in me not a profound, shattering joy, but some sort of commonplace, conceited rapture. . . . If Várya had flatly rejected me I would have flamed up with wild passion; but, having obtained her consent, I resembled a man who has said to a guest: "Make yourself at home"—and the guest actually begins to dispose of things in the room, as though it were his own house. "If she loved Kólosoff," I thought, "how is it that she has so speedily consented? Evidently, she is glad to marry anybody. . . . Well, and what of that? So much the better for me." . . . . With these strange and troubled feelings I crossed the threshold of my home. Perhaps you think my story lacking in plausibility, gentlemen? I do not know whether it resembles the truth, but I do know that everything which I have told you is the complete and genuine truth. However, during the whole of that day I gave myself up to feverish merri-

ment, told myself that I simply did not deserve such happiness; but the next morning . . . .

A wonderful thing is sleep! It not only renews the body, in a certain way it also renews the soul, restores it to its pristine simplicity and naturalness. In the course of the day you have succeeded in tuning yourself up to concert pitch, in becoming permeated with falsehood, with lying thoughts . . . . sleep, with its cold flood, washes away all these wretched quibbles, and, on awakening, you are capable, for a few moments at least, of comprehending and loving the truth. I awoke, and on reflecting upon the past day, I felt conscious of a certain awkwardness . . . . I felt rather ashamed of all my pranks. With involuntary uneasiness I thought of my visit which was to be made that day, about the explanation with Iván Semyónitch. . . . This uneasiness was torturing and fatiguing; it resembled the uneasiness of a hare which hears the baying of the hounds, and must at last emerge from its native forest into the fields . . . while in the fields the sharp-fanged harriers are awaiting it. . . . "Why was I in such a hurry!" I repeated, as on the preceding evening, but in quite another sense now. I remember that that frightful difference between yesterday and today surprised even me; it then occurred to me for the first time that mysteries lie hidden in the life of man—strange mysteries. . . . With

childish perplexity I gazed at that new, non-fantastic, actual world. By the word "actuality" many persons mean the word "triviality." Perhaps that is sometimes the case; but I must confess that the first appearance of actuality to me shook me profoundly, frightened me, startled me. . . .

What big speeches on the subject of love *which has not had its dance out,* to speak in Gógol's words! . . . I will return to my story. In the course of that morning, I again assured myself that I was the happiest of mortals. I drove out of town to Iván Semyónitch's. He received me very joyfully; he started to go off to a neighbour's, but I stopped him. I was afraid to remain alone with Várya. That evening passed cheerfully but not comfortably. Várya was neither one thing nor the other, neither amiable nor sad . . . . neither pretty nor homely. I scanned her, as the philosophers say, with the objective eye—that is, as a satiated man gazes at food. I decided that her hands were rather red. However, my blood grew hot within me at intervals, and, as I gazed at her, I surrendered myself to other reveries and thoughts. It was not so very long since I had made a so-called proposal, and here already I was feeling that she and I were living the conjugal life . . . . that our souls already constituted one *very beautiful whole,* belonged to each other, and, consequently,

were trying to search out, each for itself, its special path. . . .

"Well, have you spoken to papa?" Várya said to me, when she and I were left alone together. That question displeased me dreadfully. . . . I thought to myself:—"You 're in an awful hurry, Varvára Ivánovna!"

"No, not yet," I replied rather drily:—"but I will speak to him."

Altogether, I treated her somewhat carelessly. In spite of my promise, I said nothing decisive to Iván Semyónitch. When I went away I pressed his hand significantly, and informed him that I must have a talk with him . . . . that was all. . . .

"Good-bye!" I said to Várya.

"Until we meet again," said she.

I will not weary you long, gentlemen; I am afraid of exhausting your patience. . . . That interview did not take place. I never went back to Iván Semyónitch. To tell the truth, the first few days of my separation from Várya did not pass off without tears, reproaches, and agitation; I myself was alarmed at the speedy withering of my love; a score of times I was on the point of going to her; I pictured to myself in vivid colours her surprise, her grief, her sense of injury, but—I did not go back to Iván Semyónitch's. I entreated her forgiveness mentally; I mentally went down on my knees before her,

assured her of my deep remorse—and once, when I encountered in the street a young girl who bore a slight resemblance to her, I set off on a run without looking behind me, and only stopped to take breath in a confectioner's shop, behind five-fold puff-paste patties. The word "to-morrow" was invented for irresolute people, and for children; I, being a child, soothed myself with that magic word. "I will go to her to-morrow without fail," I said to myself, and ate and slept capitally to-day. I began to think a great deal more about Kólosoff than about Várya . . . . everywhere and incessantly I beheld before me his frank, bold, unconcerned face. I began to go to him again. He welcomed me as of yore. But how deeply conscious I was of his superiority over myself! How ridiculous did all my fancies appear to me—my mournful pensiveness during the period of Kólosoff's connection with Várya, my magnanimous determination to bring them together again, my anticipations, my raptures, my remorse! . . .

I had enacted a wretched, noisy, and prolonged comedy, while he had lived through that period so simply, so finely. . . . You will say to me: "What is there surprising about that? Your Kólosoff fell in love with a young girl, then fell out of love with her and abandoned her. . . . But that has happened to everybody." . . . Agreed; but which one of us has known how to

bid farewell in time to his past? Who—tell me —who is not afraid of the reproaches, I will not say of the reproaches of a woman . . . . of the reproaches of the first blockhead who comes to hand? Which one of us has not yielded to the desire to make a display of magnanimity, or self-conceitedly to play with another devoted heart? In conclusion, which of us is capable of resisting petty self-love—the petty *nice feelings:* compassion and remorse? Oh, gentlemen! the man who parts from a woman formerly beloved, at that great and bitter moment when he becomes conscious that his heart is not wholly, not completely permeated with her, that man, believe me, understands the sacredness of love better and more profoundly than those pusillanimous people who, out of boredom, out of weakness, continue to play on the half-broken strings of their languid and sensitive hearts.

At the beginning of my story I told you that we all called Andréi Kólosoff a remarkable man. And if a clear, simple view of life, if the absence of all phrase-making in a young man can be termed a remarkable thing, then Kólosoff deserved the name which had been bestowed on him. At a certain age, to be natural is equivalent to being remarkable. . . . But it is time for me to finish. I thank you for your attention. . . . Ah, but I forgot to tell you that, three months after my last visit, I met that old rascal Iván

Semyónitch. As a matter of course, I endeavoured to slip past him swiftly and unperceived, but, nevertheless, I could not help overhearing the following words, uttered with vexation: "Some folks are so broad-minded, you know!"

"And what became of Várya?"—asked some one.

"I don't know,"—replied the story-teller.

We all rose and went our various ways.

THE BULLY

(1846)

THE BULLY

I

THE *** regiment of cuirassiers was stationed, in the year 1829, in the village of Kirílovka, of the K*** Government. This village, with its cottages and grain-ricks, with its green hemp-patches and emaciated willows, appeared, from a distance, to be an island in the middle of a boundless sea of tilled, black-loam fields. In the middle of the village was a small pond, eternally covered with goose-down, with filthy, furrowed banks; a hundred paces from the pond, on the other side of the road, towered aloft a wooden manor-house of some gentlefolk, long empty and sadly sagging over on one side; in the garden grew ancient, sterile apple-trees, and lofty birches studded with crows' nests; at the end of the principal avenue, in a tiny house (formerly the gentry's bath-house), dwelt a decrepit butler who, grunting and clearing his throat, from ancient habit dragged himself every morning through the garden to the apartments of the gentry, although there was nothing in them to guard, except a dozen white arm-chairs upholstered in faded stuff, two pot-bellied chests

of drawers on crooked legs and with brass handles, four pictures full of holes, and one black negro of alabaster, with a broken nose. The owner of this house, a young and heedless man, lived sometimes in Petersburg, sometimes abroad —and had utterly forgotten his hereditary estate. It had come into his possession eight years previously, inherited from an extremely aged uncle, once known to all the countryside for his capital fruit-liqueurs. Empty, dark-green bottles were still scattered about in the storehouse, along with various rubbish, copy-books in variegated covers, closely written all over in miserly fashion, antique glass chandeliers, a nobleman's uniform of the epoch of Katherine II., a rusty sword with a steel hilt, and so forth.

In one of the wings the Colonel himself lodged —a married man, tall of stature, parsimonious of words, surly, and sleepy. In the other wing lived the adjutant, a sensual and highly-perfumed man, fond of flowers and butterflies. The society of the officers of the *** regiment in no way differed from any other society. Among them, a certain Avdyéi Ivánovitch Lutchkóff, staff-captain, bore the reputation of a bully. Lutchkóff was small of stature, and not good-looking; he had a small, sallow, lean face, thin black hair, ordinary features, and small, dark eyes. He had early been left an orphan, had grown up in indigence and oppression. For

whole weeks together he behaved quietly . . . . and all of a sudden—it seemed as though some fiend had taken possession of him—he would begin to harass everybody, bother everybody, stare everybody impudently in the eye; well, he fairly challenged people to a quarrel. Moreover, Avdyéi did not shun his fellow-officers, but was on friendly terms only with the perfumed adjutant; he did not play cards, and he did not drink liquor.

In May, 1829, not long before the beginning of drill, there came to the regiment a young cornet, Feódor Feódorovitch Kíster, a Russian nobleman of German extraction, very fair-haired and very modest, cultured and well-read. Until the age of twenty he had lived in the paternal home under the wing of his mamma, his grandmamma, and two aunts; he had entered the military service solely at the desire of his grandmother, who even in her old age could not see a white cockade without emotion. . . . He discharged his duties without any special eagerness, but with zeal, just as though he were conscientiously performing his duty; he dressed, not foppishly, but neatly, and according to the regulations. On the very first day of his arrival, Feódor Feódorovitch reported himself to his commanding officers; then he began to put his quarters in order. He had brought with him some cheap wall-paper, rugs, shelves, and so forth;

he papered all his walls and the doors, erected various partitions, ordered the yard to be cleaned up, rebuilt the stable and the kitchen; he even set apart a place for a bath. . . . For a whole week he busied himself; but it was a delight to enter his room afterward. In front of the windows stood a neat table, covered with various knick-knacks; in one corner was a small stand for books, with the busts of Goethe and Schiller; on the walls hung maps, four Grévedon heads and a hunting-gun; beside the table ran a stately row of pipes with correct mouth-pieces; on the floor of the anteroom lay a rug; all the doors fastened with locks; the windows were hung with curtains. Everything in Feódor Feódorovitch's room exhaled an atmosphere of order and cleanliness. It was quite different with his comrades! You could hardly make your way to one of them through the filthy yard; in the anteroom, behind a peeling canvas screen, an orderly would be snoring; on the floor lay rotten straw; on the cooking-stove, boots and the bottom of a jar overflowing with shoe-blacking; in the room itself a warped *l'ombre* table, scrawled all over with chalk; on the table, glasses half filled with cold, dark-brown tea; along the wall, a broad, broken-down, greasy divan; on the windows, pipe-ashes. . . . In the clumsy and bloated arm-chair sat the master of the house himself, in a grass-green dressing-gown with crimson

plush facings, and an embroidered skull-cap of Asiatic origin, while by the master's side a fat and good-for-nothing dog in a stinking brass collar was snoring. . . All the doors were always wide open. . . .

Feódor Feódorovitch pleased his new comrades. They liked him for his good-nature, his modesty, his hearty cordiality, and his innate inclination to "everything beautiful,"—in a word, for everything which in any other officer they would, possibly, have considered unbefitting. They called Kíster "the pretty girl," and treated him tenderly and gently. Avdyéi Ivánovitch alone looked askance upon him. One day, after drill, Lutchkóff stepped up to him, with slightly-compressed lips and inflated nostrils.

"Good morning, Mr. Knaster."

Kíster glanced at him with surprise.

"My respects, Mr. Knaster," repeated Lutchkóff.

"My name is Kíster, my dear sir."

"You don't say so, Mr. Knaster."

Feódor Feódorovitch turned his back on him and went home. Lutchkóff stared after him with a sneer.

On the following day, immediately after drill, he stepped up to Kíster again.

"Well, how 's your health, Mr. Kinderbalzam?"

Kíster flared up, and stared him straight in the face. Avdyéi Ivánovitch's little, bilious eyes lighted up with malicious joy.

"I 'm speaking to you, Mr. Kinderbalzam!"

"My dear sir," replied Feódor Feódorovitch, —"I consider your jest stùpid and indecorous— do you hear? stupid and indecorous."

"When shall we fight?" retorted Lutchkóff calmly.

"Whenever you like . . . . say to-morrow."

The next day they fought. Lutchkóff slightly wounded Kíster, and, to the intense amazement of the seconds, stepped up to the wounded man, took his hand, and asked his pardon. Kíster was confined to the house for a fortnight. Avdyéi Ivánovitch dropped in several times to see the invalid, and after Feódor Feódorovitch's recovery, struck up a friendship with him. Whether it was that the young officer's resolution had pleased him, or a sentiment akin to remorse had awaked in his soul, it would be difficult to determine; . . . . but dating from the duel with Kíster, Avdyéi Ivánovitch was hardly ever parted from him, and first called him Feódor, then Fédya. In his presence, he became another man, and—strange to say!—not to his advantage. It did not suit his style to be gentle and soft. Nevertheless, he did not evoke sympathy in any one: such was his fate! He belonged to the category of people who seem to have been endowed with

the right of power over others; but nature had denied him the gifts which form the indispensable justification for such a right. As he had received no education, and was not distinguished by brains, he ought not to have divested himself of his ordinary character; perhaps harshness in him proceeded precisely from his consciousness of the defects of his own bringing-up, from a desire to conceal himself entirely beneath one unvarying mask. . Avdyéi Ivánovitch had first made himself despise people; then he had observed that it was not a difficult matter to frighten them, and had begun to despise them in reality. Lutchkóff delighted in putting an end, by his mere appearance, to every conversation which was not utterly trivial. "I know nothing and never learned anything, and have no abilities," he thought to himself; "therefore don't you know anything and don't you display your abilities before me. . . . ." Kíster forced Lutchkóff to emerge, at last, from his assumed rôle, possibly because until his acquaintance with him the bully had not encountered a single really "ideal" man —that is to say, a man disinterestedly and good-naturedly immersed in dreams, and consequently indulgent and not conceited. Avdyéi Ivánovitch would come to Kíster of a morning, light his pipe, and quietly seat himself in an easy-chair. Lutchkóff was not ashamed of his ignorance in Kíster's presence; he trusted

—and not in vain—to the latter's German discretion.

"Well, what now?"—he would begin:—"what didst thou do last evening? Read, I suppose, hey?"

"Yes, I read. . . ."

"And what didst thou read? Come, tell me, my dear fellow, tell me."—Avdyéi Ivánovitch maintained his jeering tone to the end.

"I read Kleist's 'Idyl,' brother. Akh, how fine it is! If thou wilt permit me, I will translate a few lines to thee."—And Kíster translated with fervour, while Lutchkóff, wrinkling up his forehead, and compressing his lips, listened attentively. . . . "Yes, yes,"—he kept repeating hastily, with a disagreeable smile,—"'t is fine . . . very fine. . . I remember that I have read that . . . . 't is fine.

"Tell me, please,"—he added with a drawl and, as it were, reluctantly:—"what is thy opinion of Louis the Fourteenth?"

And Kíster began to talk about Louis XIV. And Lutchkóff listened, did not understand much of it at all, understood some of it wrongly . . . . and at last decided to make a remark. . . . . The idea threw him into a perspiration: "Well, and what if I do talk nonsense?" he thought. And, as a matter of fact, he did it frequently, but Kíster never answered him harshly; the good-natured young fellow was heartily de-

lighted that a desire for enlightenment was waking up in the man. Alas! Avdyéi Ivánovitch questioned Kíster not out of a desire for enlightenment, but just because he felt like it, God knows why! Perhaps he wished to ascertain by experiment what sort of a head he, Lutchkóff, had,—a stupid one, or merely an unpolished one.—"But I actually am stupid," he said to himself more than once, with a bitter grin, and suddenly straightened himself up stiffly, stared arrogantly and impudently about him, and smiled maliciously if he noticed some comrade lower his glance before his. "Just so, brother, my learned, cultured man . . . ." he whispered through his teeth. "Wouldst not thou like . . . . thou knowest what?"

The officers did not discuss the sudden friendship between Kíster and Lutchkóff long: they were used to the bully's peculiarities. "The devil has entered into compact with the infant!" they said. . . Kíster everywhere lauded his new friend fervently, and they did not contradict him, because they feared Lutchkóff; and Lutchkóff himself never mentioned Kíster's name before others, but dropped the acquaintance of the perfumed adjutant.

II

The landed proprietors in southern Russia are very fond of giving balls, of inviting the officers

to their houses, and giving them their daughters in marriage. Ten versts from the village of Kirílovo dwelt precisely such a landed proprietor, a certain Mr. Perekátoff, the possessor of four hundred souls and a fairly spacious house. He had a daughter of seventeeñ, Máshenka, and a wife, Neníla Makárievna. Mr. Perekátoff had once served in the cavalry, but out of love for a country life, out of indolence, he had resigned and begun to live his own life quietly, after the manner of middle-class squires. Neníla Makárievna was descended in a not entirely legitimate manner from a distinguished boyár of Moscow.

Her protector reared his Nenílushka very carefully, as the saying is, in his own house, but got her off his hands with considerable haste, at the first demand, as uncertain wares. Neníla Makárievna was not comely; the distinguished gentleman gave her a dowry of ten thousand rubles, all told; she jumped at Mr. Perekátoff. Mr. Perekátoff thought it very flattering to himself to wed a cultured, clever young lady . . . . well, and to sum it up, one who also was related to a distinguished dignitary. That dignitary afforded the married pair his protection even after the wedding; that is to say, he accepted from them gifts of salted woodcock and addressed Perekátoff as, "thou, my good fellow," and sometimes simply as "thou." Neníla Maká-

rievna completely ruled her husband, managed affairs, and disposed of the entire estate,—very cleverly, by the way; in any case, far better than Mr. Perekátoff himself could have done. She did not oppress her spouse excessively, but kept him under her thumb, ordered his clothes herself, and dressed him in English fashion, as is befitting a country squire; by her command, Mr. Perekátoff cultivated on his chin a Spanish goatee, to conceal a large wart which resembled an overripe raspberry; Neníla Makárievna, on her side, was wont to inform her guests that her husband played the flute, and that all flute-players let the hair grow below their under lip; it was more convenient to hold the instrument. Mr. Perekátoff, from early morning, went about in a tall, clean neckerchief, with hair well brushed and face well washed. However, he was extremely well satisfied with his lot: he always had very savoury dinners, did whatever he wished, and slept as much as he could. Neníla Makárievna set up in her house "a foreign order of things," as the neighbours said: she kept few servants, and dressed them neatly. She was tortured with ambition; she wanted to become at least Marshaless of the Nobility for the county, but the nobles of the *** county, although they ate their fill at her house, nevertheless elected not her husband, but at one time retired Premier-Major Burcholtz, at another, Second-Major

Burundiukóff. Mr. Perekátoff seemed to them too citified a rogue.

Mr. Perekátoff's daughter Máshenka resembled her father in face. Neníla Makárievna had taken great pains with her education. She spoke French well, and played respectably on the piano. She was of medium height, quite plump and white; her rather chubby face was enlivened by a good-natured, merry smile; her chestnut hair, which was not too thick, her small brown eyes, her agreeable voice—everything about her pleased in a quiet way, and that was all. On the other hand, the absence of affectation, of prejudices, her erudition, which was remarkable in a maid of the steppes, her freedom of expression, the calm simplicity of her speech and glance evoked involuntary surprise. She had developed in freedom; Neníla Makárievna had not put any restraint upon her.

One morning, about twelve o'clock, the whole Perekátoff family was assembled in the drawing-room. The husband, in a green round dress-coat, a tall, checked stock, and yellowish-grey trousers with gaiters, was standing in front of the window, and catching flies with great assiduity. The daughter was sitting at her embroidery-frame; her small, plump hand in a black mitt rose and fell gracefully over the canvas. Neníla Makárievna sat on the couch and stared silently at the floor.

"Did you send invitations to the *** regiment, Sergyéi Sergyéevitch?"—she asked her husband.

"For this evening? Of course, *ma chère,* I sent them." (He was forbidden to call her mátushka.[1]) "Of course!"

"There are no cavaliers at all,"—went on Neníla Makárievna.—"There is no one for the young ladies to dance with."

Her husband sighed, as though the absence of cavaliers afflicted him.

"Mamma,"—said Másha, suddenly:—"is Monsieur Lutchkóff invited?"

"What Lutchkóff?"

"He is an officer also. They say he is very interesting."

"Really?"

"Yes; he is not good-looking, and not young, but every one is afraid of him. He is a frightful duellist." (Mamma frowned slightly.) "I should very much like to see him. . . ."

Sergyéi Sergyéevitch interrupted his daughter.

"What is there to see, my darling? Dost thou think that he looks like Lord Byron?" (At that epoch people had only just begun to talk about Lord Byron among us.)—"Nonsense! Why, my darling, I also bore the reputation of a swashbuckler in my day."

Mátushka (literally, "dear little mother") is the genuine Russian form of address for any woman of any rank.—Translator.

Másha stared in amazement at her parent, broke out laughing, then sprang up and kissed him on the cheek. His spouse smiled slightly . . . . but Sergyéi Sergyéevitch had not lied.

"I don't know whether that gentleman will come,"—said Neníla Makárievna.—"Perhaps he also will favour us with his company."

The daughter heaved a sigh.

"Look out, don't fall in love with him,"—remarked Sergyéi Sergyéevitch.—"I know that all of you nowadays are such . . . . you see . . . . so given to raptures. . . ."

"No,"—returned Másha, artlessly.

Neníla Makárievna gazed coldly at her husband. Sergyéi Sergyéevitch toyed with his watch-chain in some confusion, took from the table his broad-brimmed English hat, and set off to attend to the estate. His dog ran timidly and submissively after him. Being a wise animal, it felt that its master had not much power in the house, and behaved itself modestly and cautiously.

Neníla Makárievna approached her daughter, gently lifted her head, and looked affectionately into her eyes.

"Thou wilt tell me when thou fallest in love?" she asked.

Másha, with a smile, kissed her mother's hand and nodded her head affirmatively several times.

"See that thou dost,"—remarked Neníla Ma-

kárievna, patting her cheek, and following her husband out of the room. Másha leaned against the back of her easy-chair, dropped her head on her breast, intertwined her fingers, and stared for a long time out of the window, narrowing her eyes. . . . A faint flush played over her rosy cheeks; with a sigh she straightened herself up, began to embroider, dropped her needle, propped her face on her hand, and lightly biting her finger-nails, fell into thought . . . . then glanced at her shoulder, at her outstretched hand, rose, went to the mirror, laughed, put on her hat, and went off into the park.

On that same evening, about eight o'clock, the guests began to assemble. Madame Perekátoff very amiably received and "entertained" the ladies, Máshenka the young girls; Sergyéi Sergyéevitch chatted with the landed proprietors about farming, and kept constantly glancing at his wife. The young dandies began to present themselves; also the officers, who had deliberately arrived as late as possible. At last the Colonel himself entered, escorted by his Adjutant, Kíster, and Lutchkóff. He presented them to the hostess. Lutchkóff bowed in silence; Kíster muttered the customary "Delighted." . . . . Mr. Perekátoff stepped up to the Colonel, shook hands cordially with him, and gazed feelingly into his eyes. The Colonel immediately knit his brows. The dancing began. Kíster invited

Máshenka. At that period the Écossaise was still flourishing.

"Tell me, please," Másha said to him when, after having galloped a score of times to the end of the hall, they had, at last, become the leading pair: "Why is not your friend dancing?"

"What friend?"

Másha indicated Lutchkóff with the tip of her fan.

"He never dances,"—replied Kíster.

"Then why did he come?"

Kíster was somewhat disconcerted.—"He wished to have the pleasure . . . ."

Máshenka interrupted him.—"You have recently been transferred to our regiment, I believe?"

"To *your* regiment?"—remarked Kíster, with a smile:—"Yes, recently."

"You are not bored here?"

"Good gracious . . . . no . . . I have found such agreeable society here . . . . and nature! . . . ." Kíster launched out into a description of nature. Másha listened to him without raising her head. Avdyéi Ivánovitch was standing in the corner, and gazing indifferently at the dancers.

"How old is Mr. Lutchkóff?"—she suddenly inquired.

"Thirty . . . . thirty-five, I think,"—replied Kíster.

"They say he is a dangerous man . . . hot-tempered,"—hastily added Másha.

"He is rather irascible . . . . but he is a very fine man, nevertheless."

"They say that every one is afraid of him."

Kíster burst out laughing.

"And you?"

"He and I are friends."

"Really?"

"Your turn, your turn, your turn," was shouted at them from all sides. They gave a start, and began once more to gallop sideways the whole length of the hall.

"Well, I congratulate thee,"—said Kíster to Lutchkóff, approaching him after the dance:—"the daughter of the house has kept asking me incessant questions about thee."

"Is it possible?"—returned Lutchkóff, scornfully.

"On my word of honour! And she 's very pretty, you know; just look."

"But which one of them is she?"

Kíster pointed out Másha to him.

"Ah! not bad-looking!"—And Lutchkóff yawned.

"What a cold man!"—exclaimed Kíster, and ran off to invite another young girl.

Avdyéi Ivánovitch was greatly pleased with the information imparted by Kíster, although he did yawn, and even yawn pretty loudly. To

arouse curiosity flattered his self-love intensely; he despised love—in words . . . . but inwardly he felt that it would be a difficult and troublesome matter to make himself beloved. . . . Difficult and troublesome to make himself beloved,—but very easy to pretend to be an indifferent, reticent, haughty man. Avdyéi Ivánovitch was ill-favoured and not young; but, on the other hand, he enjoyed a terrible reputation—and, consequently, had a right to put on airs. He had become used to bitter and taciturn enjoyment of surly solitude; this was not the first time that he had attracted the attention of women; some had even tried to make friends with him, but he had repulsed them with obdurate stubbornness; he knew that tenderness was not becoming to his style (in hours of trysts and frankness he became first awkward and vulgar, and then, out of vexation, rough to the point of insipidity, of insult); he called to mind that two or three women, with whom he had once consorted, had cooled toward him immediately after the first moments of close acquaintance, and had hastily beaten a retreat from him . . . and therefore he had made up his mind, at last, to remain a riddle, and to scorn that which fortune had denied to him. . . . People, as a whole, know no other scorn, apparently. No frank, involuntary, that is to say, good manifestation of passion was becoming to Lutchkóff; he was forced continually to put a restraint on himself, even when he

was angry. Kíster alone was not disgusted when Lutchkóff burst into a guffaw of laughter; the eyes of the good German sparkled with the noble joy of sympathy, when he read to Avdyéi Ivánovitch his favourite pages from Schiller, and the bully sat in front of him, with head lowered like a wolf.

Kíster danced until he was ready to drop. Lutchkóff did not quit his corner, knit his brows in a frown, now and then darted a stealthy glance at Másha—and, on encountering her eyes, immediately imparted to his own an indifferent expression. Másha danced three times with Kíster. The enthusiastic young fellow excited her confidence. She chatted very merrily with him, but at heart he felt awkward. Lutchkóff engrossed her.

The mazurka thundered out. The officers began to leap, stamp their heels, and to toss their epaulets with their shoulders; the civilians stamped their heels also. Still Lutchkóff did not stir from his place, and slowly followed the couples with his eyes as they flitted past. Some one touched his sleeve . . . he glanced round; his neighbour directed his attention to Másha. She was standing in front of him, without raising her eyes, and offering him her hand.[1] Lutchkóff

[1] The mazurka, which is still a great favourite in Russia, greatly resembles the cotillon in everything except the steps, which (as the description above indicates) are vivacious. Both the cotillon and the mazurka are danced—one before, the other after, supper—at Court balls and other dances.—Translator.

first stared at her in surprise, then indifferently removed his broadsword, threw his hat on the floor, awkwardly made his way among the armchairs, took Másha by the hand—and passed along the circle, without any skipping or stamping, as though unwillingly performing a disagreeable duty. . . Másha's heart beat violently.

"Why do you not dance?" she asked him at last.

"I don't like it,"—replied Lutchkóff.—"Where is your place?"

"Yonder, sir."

Lutchkóff led Másha to her chair, calmly made his bow to her, calmly returned to his corner . . . . but the bile stirred merrily within him.

Kíster invited Másha.

"What a strange man your friend is!"

"And he interests you very much" . . . . said Feódor Feódorovitch, roguishly screwing up his kind, blue eyes.

"Yes . . . he must be very unhappy."

"He unhappy? Where did you get that idea?"—And Feódor Feódorovitch burst out laughing.

"You don't know . . . you don't know. . ."—Másha shook her head gravely.

"But why should n't I know?"

Again Másha shook her head and cast a glance at Lutchkóff. Avdyéi Ivánovitch noticed that glance, shrugged his shoulders imperceptibly, and went into another room.

III

Several months passed after that evening. Lutchkóff had not been to the Perekátoffs' a single time. Kíster, on the other hand, had called on them quite often. Neníla Makárievna liked him, but it was not she who attracted Feódor Feódorovitch. He liked Másha. Being an inexperienced man, and one who had not exhausted his stock of talk, he found great pleasure in exchanging sentiments and opinions, and good-naturedly believed in the possibility of a calm and exalted friendship between a young man and a young girl.

One day, a tróïka of well-fed and spirited horses brought him with celerity to the house of Mr. Perekátoff. It was a summer day, stifling and sultry. There was not a cloud anywhere. The azure of the sky was thickened at the edges to such a degree that the eye took it for a thundercloud. The house built by Mr. Perekátoff for summer residence, with the customary forethought of the steppes, had its windows turned directly to the sun. Neníla Makárievna had ordered all the shutters to be closed early in the morning. Kíster entered the cool, shaded drawing-room. The light lay in long streaks on the floor, in short, frequent bands on the walls. The Perekátoff family welcomed Feódor Feódoro-

vitch cordially. After dinner, Neníla Makárievna took herself off to her own bedchamber for a nap; Mr. Perekátoff ensconced himself on a divan in the drawing-room; Másha seated herself at her embroidery-frame near the window; Kíster opposite her. Másha, without opening the frame, leaned her breast against it, and propped her head on her hands. Kíster began to narrate something to her; she listened to him inattentively, as though she were expecting something, occasionally glanced at her father, and suddenly stretched out her hand.

"Listen, Feódor Feódorovitch . . . . only, speak as softly as possible . . . . papa has fallen asleep."

Mr. Perekátoff had, in fact, according to his wont, fallen asleep as he sat on the divan, with his head thrown back, and his mouth slightly open.

"What do you wish?"—asked Kíster with curiosity.

"You will laugh at me."

"Mercy on us, what an idea!" . . . .

Másha dropped her head so that only the upper part of her face remained uncovered by her hands, and in an undertone, not without embarrassment, she asked Kíster: "why he never brought Mr. Lutchkóff with him?" This was not the first time Másha had mentioned him since the ball. . . . Kíster maintained silence. Másha

glanced timorously from behind her interlaced embroidery-frame.

"May I tell you my opinion frankly?"—Kíster asked her.

"Why not? Of course."

"It seems to me that Lutchkóff has made a great impression on you!"

"No!"—replied Másha, and bent forward, as though desirous of inspecting the pattern more closely; a slender golden strip of light lay on her hair:—"no . . . . but . . . ."

"But what?"—said Kíster with a smile.

"Why, you see,"—said Másha, and raised her head suddenly, so that the streak of light fell straight upon her eyes:—"you see . . . . he . . . ."

"He interests you. . . ."

"Well . . . . yes . . . ." said Másha, pausing between her words, blushed, turned away her head a little, and in that posture continued to speak:—"there is something about him that . . . . There now, you are laughing at me,"—she suddenly added, with a swift glance at Feódor Feódorovitch.

Feódor Feódorovitch smiled the gentlest of smiles.

"I tell you everything that comes into my head,"—pursued Másha:—"I know that you are my . . . ." (she meant to say "friend") "good friend."

Kíster bowed. Másha silently and timidly

extended her hand to him; Feódor Feódorovitch respectfully pressed the tips of her fingers.

"He must be a great eccentric,"—remarked Másha, and again set her elbows on her embroidery-frame.

"An eccentric?"

"Of course; it is as an eccentric that he interests me!"—added Másha, craftily.

"Lutchkóff is a noble, a remarkable man,"—replied Kíster, gravely.—"The men of our regiment do not know him, do not value him, and see in him only his external side. He is, of course, stubborn, strange, impatient, but he has a good heart."

Másha listened eagerly to Feódor Feódorovitch.

"I will bring him to you. I will tell him that there is no need to fear you, that it is ridiculous for him to be shy. . . . I will tell him . . . . Oh, yes! I know what I shall say. . . . That is, you must not think, nevertheless, that I . . . ." Kíster grew confused; Másha also was confused. . . . "Yes, and in short, you see, he only . . . interests you . . . . so . . . ."

"Well, of course, as many others interest me."

Kíster cast a roguish glance at her.

"Good, good,"—he said with an aspect of satisfaction:—"I will bring him to you. . . ."

"Why, no. . . ."

"Good; but I tell you that everything will be all right. . . . I 'll arrange it. . . ."

"What a man you are! . . ." remarked Másha, with a smile, shaking her finger at him. Mr. Perekátoff yawned and opened his eyes.

"Why, I do believe I 've been asleep?"—he muttered with surprise. This question and surprise were repeated every day. Másha and Kíster began a conversation about Schiller.

But Feódor Feódorovitch did not feel quite at his ease; envy seemed to have begun to stir within him . . . . and he was nobly indignant at himself. Neníla Makárievna entered the drawing-room. Tea was served. Mr. Perekátoff made his dog jump several times over a cane, and then announced that he had taught the dog himself, while the dog politely wagged his tail, licked his chops, and blinked. When, at last, the sultry heat had abated and the cool evening breeze had come up, the whole Perekátoff family set off for a stroll in the birch-grove. Feódor Feódorovitch kept casting incessant glances at Másha, as though he were desirous of giving her to understand that he would execute her commission; Másha felt vexed at herself, and gay, and somewhat daunted. Kíster suddenly, without rhyme or reason, began to talk in a decidedly lofty style about love in general, about friendship . . . . but, on observing Neníla Makárievna's clear and

attentive glance, he as suddenly changed the conversation.

The sunset glow blazed up brilliantly and splendidly. In front of the birch-coppice stretched a broad, level meadow. Másha took it into her head to play at tag. Maids and lackeys made their appearance. Mr. Perekátoff stood with his wife, Kíster with Másha. The maids ran with faint obsequious shrieks; Mr. Perekátoff's valet made so bold as to separate Neníla Makárievna from her husband; one maid respectfully surrendered to the master; Feódor Feódorovitch did not part from Másha. Every time that he resumed his place he said two or three words to her; Másha, all flushed with running, listened to him with a smile, and smoothed her hair with her hand. After supper, Kíster went away.

The night was calm and starry. Kíster doffed his cap. He was agitated; he had a slight lump in his throat. "Yes," he said at last, almost aloud, "she loves him; I will bring them together; I will justify her confidence." Although nothing, as yet, had proved any open inclination on Másha's part for Lutchkóff, although, according to her own words, he had merely aroused her curiosity, yet Kíster had already succeeded in composing for himself an entire romance, in prescribing his duty to himself. He made up his mind to sacrifice his own

feelings—the more so as, "with the exception of sincere affection, I really feel nothing, so far," he thought. Kíster really was capable of sacrificing himself to friendship, to an acknowledged duty. He had read a great deal, and therefore imagined that he was experienced and even penetrating; he did not doubt the truth of his assumptions; he did not suspect that life is infinitely varied and never repeats itself. Gradually, Feódor Feódorovitch attained to a state of rapture. He began, with emotion, to think of his mission. To be the mediator between a loving, timid young girl and a man who was, possibly, obdurate only because it had never happened to him a single time in life to love and to be loved; to bring them together, to interpret their own feelings to them, and then to withdraw, without allowing any one to perceive the magnitude of his sacrifice,—what a fine act! Despite the coolness of the night, the face of the kind dreamer was burning hot. . . .

Early in the morning, on the following day, he betook himself to Lutchkóff.

Avdyéi Ivánovitch, according to his wont, was lying on his divan and smoking a pipe. Kíster exchanged greetings with him.

"I was at the Perekátoffs' yesterday,"—he said with some solemnity.

"Ah!"—returned Lutchkóff, indifferently, with a yawn.

"Yes. They are very fine people."

"Really?"

"I talked with them about thee."

"Greatly honoured, I 'm sure; with whom, pray?"

"With the old people . . . . and with the daughter."

"Ah! with that . . . . fatty?"

"She 's a very fine girl, Lutchkóff."

"Well, yes, they 're all very fine, those girls."

"No, Lutchkóff, thou dost not know her. I never before have met so clever, kind, and sensitive a young girl."

Lutchkóff began to hum through his nose: "In the *Hamburg Gazette*—hast not thou read it?—how the year before last—Münich won the victory. . . ."[1]

"Yes, but I tell thee . . . ."

"Thou 'rt in love with her, Fédya,"—remarked Lutchkóff, with a sneer.

"Not at all. I never thought of such a thing."

"Fédya, thou 'rt in love with her!"

"What nonsense! Can't a fellow . . . ."

"Thou 'rt in love with her, thou friend of my heart, thou black-beetle that lodgest behind the oven,"—drawled Avdyéi Ivánovitch in a sing-song tone.

"Ekh, Avdyéi, shame on thee!"—said Kíster, with vexation.

[1] A fragment from an old song. Münich was a prominent general and statesman in the reign of Anna Ioánnovna, and during the regency of Anna Leopoldovna.—Translator.

With any other man, Lutchkóff would have sung on worse than ever; he did not tease Kíster. —" Well, well, *sprechen sie deutsch,* Iván Andréitch,"—he growled in an undertone:—" don't get angry."

" Listen, Avdyéi,"—said Kíster, with fervour, sitting down by his side.—" Thou knowest that I love thee." (Lutchkóff made a grimace.) " But one thing in thee does not please me, I admit . . . namely, that thou wilt have nothing to do with anybody, always sittest at home, and avoidest all intercourse with nice people. For there are nice people! Well, let us assume that thou hast been deceived in life, hast grown hard, or something of that sort; thou needst not fling thyself on everybody's neck; but why shouldst thou repudiate everybody? Why, if thou goest on like this, thou mayest drive me away also, one of these days."

Lutchkóff continued to smoke with cool indifference.

" That 's why nobody knows you . . . except me; any one else would think God knows what about thee. . . . Avdyéi!" added Kíster, after a brief silence:—" dost thou not believe in virtue, Avdyéi?"

" How can I help believing? . . . . Yes, I believe in it, . . ." said Lutchkóff.

Kíster pressed his hand with emotion.

" I want,"—he went on in a much moved voice, —" to reconcile thee with life. I 'm going to

make thee grow merry, blossom out . . . . precisely that—blossom out. How glad I shall be then! Only, thou must allow me to dispose of thee, of thy time, occasionally. What day is to-day? Monday. . . . To-morrow is Tuesday. On Wednesday, yes, on Wednesday, we will go to the Perekátoffs' together. They will be so delighted to see thee . . . and we shall pass the time so merrily . . there. . . . But now let me smoke a pipe."

Avdyéi Ivánovitch lay motionless on the divan and stared at the ceiling. Kíster lighted his pipe, walked to the window, and began to drum on the panes with his fingers.

"So they talked about me?"—asked Avdyéi, suddenly.

"Yes, they did," returned Kíster, significantly.

"What did they say?"

"Well, they talked. They are very anxious to make thine acquaintance."

"Who in particular?"

"Just see how curious he is!"

Avdyéi called his servant, and gave orders to have his horse saddled.

"Whither away?"

"To the riding-school."

"Well, good-bye. So we shall go to the Perekátoffs', shall we not?"

"Yes, if thou wishest,"—said Lutchkóff, indolently, stretching himself.

"That 's a fine fellow!"—exclaimed Kíster, and went out into the street, became pensive, and heaved a deep sigh.

IV

Másha was walking to the door of the drawing-room when the arrival of Messrs. Kíster and Lutchkóff was announced. She immediately returned to her chamber, and made a movement to approach the mirror. . . . Her heart beat violently. A maid came to summon her to the drawing-room. Másha drank a little water, paused a couple of times on the stairs, and at last descended. Mr. Perekátoff was not at home. Neníla Makárievna was sitting on the divan; Lutchkóff was sitting in an arm-chair, in his uniform, with his hat on his knees; Kíster sat by his side. They both rose on Másha's entrance,—Kíster with his customary friendly smile, Lutchkóff with a stiff and solemn mien. She bowed to them both in confusion, and went to her mother. The first ten minutes passed off well. Másha drew breath once more, and began gradually to observe Lutchkóff. He replied to the hostess's questions briefly, but uneasily; he was intimidated, like all self-conscious people. Neníla Makárievna proposed to the guests that they should take a stroll in the park, but she herself went no further than the balcony. She did

not regard it as indispensable to keep an eye constantly on her daughter, and hobble about after her everywhere, with a plethoric reticule in her hands, after the example of many mothers of the steppes. The stroll lasted quite a long time. Másha talked chiefly with Kíster, but did not venture to look either at him or at Lutchkóff. Avdyéi Ivánovitch did not converse with her; emotion was discernible in Kíster's voice. For some reason he laughed and chattered a great deal. . . . They approached the river. A fathom distant from the shore grew a water-lily which seemed to be reposing on the smooth surface of the water, carpeted with its broad, round leaves.

"What a beautiful flower!" remarked Másha.

She had not finished uttering these words before Lutchkóff drew out his broadsword, grasped the slender branches of a willow with one hand and, bending over the water with his whole body, cut off the head of the flower. "The water is deep here, take care!" cried Másha in alarm. With the tip of his sword, Lutchkóff drew the flower ashore, at her very feet. She bent down, picked it up, and with tender, joyous surprise looked at Avdyéi.

"Bravo!"—cried Kíster.

"And I don't know how to swim, . . ." said Lutchkóff, abruptly.

Másha did not like this remark. "Why did he say that?" she thought.

Lutchkóff and Kíster remained at Mr. Pereká-toff's until the evening. Something new and unprecedented took place in Másha's soul; thoughtful perplexity was more than once depicted on her countenance. Somehow, she moved more slowly, did not flush at her mother's glances—on the contrary, she seemed to seek them, seemed herself to be interrogating her. During the entire course of the evening, Lutchkóff showed her a certain clumsy attention; but this very clumsiness pleased her innocent vanity. But when both of them had departed, with a promise to come again in a few days, she went softly to her chamber and gazed about her for a long time, as though in wonder. Neníla Makárievna came to her, kissed and embraced her, as was her habit. Másha opened her lips, tried to begin a conversation with her mother,—and did not utter a word. She wanted to make a confession, but did not know about what. On the night-stand, the flower plucked by Lutchkóff lay on the water in a clean glass. After she was in bed, Másha half rose, propped herself on her elbow, and her virgin lips softly touched the fresh white petals. . . .

"Well, how now?" Kíster asked his comrade on the following day:—"do you like the Perekátoffs? Was I right? Hey? Tell me!"

Lutchkóff made no answer.

"Come, tell me, tell me."

"Why, really, I don't know."

"Come, stop that!"

"That . . . . what the deuce is her name? . . . . that Máshenka—is all right; she is n't so ugly."

"Well, there, you see. . . ." said Kíster—and stopped short.

Five days later Lutchkóff himself suggested to Kíster that they should go to the Perekátoff's'. He would not have gone to them alone; in the absence of Feódor Feódorovitch he would have been obliged to carry on the conversation, and this he was unable to do, and avoided as much as possible.

Másha was much more at her ease when the friends arrived for the second time. She now secretly rejoiced that she had not worried her mother by an unasked confession. Before dinner, Avdyéi offered to mount a young, unbroken horse, and in spite of the animal's mad leaps, he tamed it completely. In the evening he began to unbend, set to joking and laughing —and although he speedily bethought himself, he had already contrived to produce a momentary disagreeable impression on Másha. She herself did not yet know precisely what feeling Lutchkóff had excited in her, but everything about him which did not please her she attributed to the influence of unhappiness, of solitude.

V

The friends began to make frequent visits to the Perekátóffs'. Kíster's position became more and more burdensome. He did not repent . . . . no, but he wished, at least, to curtail the period of his trial. His attachment to Másha augmented with every day; she herself was well disposed toward him; but to be eternally nothing more than a mediator, a confidant, even a friend—is such a heavy, ungrateful rôle! Coldly enthusiastic people prate a vast deal about the sanctity of suffering, about the bliss of suffering . . . but sufferings afforded no bliss to Kíster's warm, simple heart. At last, one day, when Lutchkóff entered his room, already fully dressed, and the calash had driven up to the porch, Feódor Feódorovitch, to the amazement of his friend, declared flatly that he meant to remain at home. Lutchkóff entreated, grew vexed, waxed wrathful. . . . Kíster excused himself on the pretext of a headache. Lutchkóff set off alone.

The bully had changed in many ways of late. He left his comrades in peace, he did not harry the novices, and although he had not blossomed forth in soul, as Kíster had predicted that he would, still he really had quieted down. He could not have been called a disillusioned man previously,—he had seen almost nothing, and experienced al-

most nothing,—and therefore it is not remarkable that Másha should have occupied his thoughts. However, his heart had not grown softer; the bile in it had merely subsided. Másha's feelings toward him were of a strange nature. She hardly ever looked him straight in the face; she did not know how to chat with him. . . . But when they chanced to be left alone, Másha became frightfully embarrassed. She took him for a remarkable man, and was intimidated in his presence; she grew agitated, she imagined that she did not understand him, did not deserve his confidence; she thought of him in a cheerless, heavy way—but incessantly. Kíster's presence, on the contrary, was a relief to her, and disposed her to mirth, although it did not gladden or agitate her; with him she could chat for hours; leaning on his arm as on the arm of a brother, she gazed into his eyes in a friendly way; she laughed when he laughed—and rarely called him to mind. In Lutchkóff there was something mysterious for the young girl; she felt that his soul was dark "as the forest," and strove to penetrate into that mysterious gloom. . . . Exactly in this way do children gaze into a deep well, until at last they espy, at the very bottom, the motionless, black water.

When Lutchkóff entered the drawing-room alone, Másha was startled at first . . . . but afterward she rejoiced. It had already seemed

to her, more than once, that between Lutchkóff and herself there existed a certain misapprehension, that hitherto he had had no opportunity to explain himself. Lutchkóff communicated to her the cause of Kíster's absence; the old people expressed their sympathy; but Másha looked incredulously at Avdyéi, and suffered poignantly with anticipation. After dinner they were left alone; Másha did not know what to say, and seated herself at the piano; her fingers flew hastily and tremulously over the keys; she kept pausing constantly and waiting for the first word. Lutchkóff did not understand and did not like music. Másha began to talk to him about Rossini (Rossini had just come into fashion), about Mozart. . . . Avdyéi Ivánovitch replied: "Yes, ma'am; no, ma'am; certainly, ma'am; very beautiful,"—and that was all. Másha began to play some brilliant variations on a theme by Rossini. Lutchkóff listened and listened, ... and when at last she turned toward him, his face expressed such unfeigned boredom that Másha instantly sprang to her feet and shut the piano with a bang. She walked to the window and stared for a long time into the park; Lutchkóff did not stir from his seat, and preserved silence. Impatience began to usurp the place of timidity in Másha's soul. "What is it?" she thought: "willst thou not, or canst thou not?" It was Lutchkóff's turn to feel timid. Again he felt

his usual torturing lack of confidence: he was already waxing wroth! . . . .

"'T was the devil prompted me to get myself entangled with a wretched little girl," he muttered to himself. . . . And yet, how easy it was at that moment to touch Másha's heart! No matter what so remarkable, although so strange a man as she imagined Lutchkóff to be, had said, she would have understood all, excused all, believed all. . . . But that heavy, stupid silence! Tears of vexation welled up in her eyes.

"If he does not wish to explain himself, if I really am not worthy of his confidence, why does he come to our house? Or perhaps I do not know how to make him speak out. . . ." And she turned swiftly round, and looked at him in such an inquiring, such a persistent way that he could not fail to understand her glance, could no longer hold his peace. . . .

"Márya Sergyéevna!"—he ejaculated, stammering,—"I . . . . I have . . . . I must say something to you."

"Speak,"—returned Másha, swiftly.

Lutchkóff gazed about him irresolutely.

"I cannot now. . . ."

"Why?"

"I should like to have a talk with you . . . . in private. . . ."

"But we are alone now."

"Yes . . . but . . . . here in the house . . . ."

Másha was disconcerted. . . "If I refuse him,"—she thought,—"everything is at an end." . . . . Curiosity ruined Eve. . . . .

"I agree,"—she said at last.

"When? Where?"

Másha breathed hastily and unevenly.

"To-morrow . . . . evening. Do you know the coppice above the Long Meadow? . . ."

"Behind the mill?"

Másha nodded her head.

"At what o'clock?"

"Wait. . . . ."

She could not utter anything more; her voice broke . . . she turned pale, and hastily left the room.

A quarter of an hour later, Mr. Perekátoff, with the amiability characteristic of him, escorted Lutchkóff to the anteroom, pressed his hand with emotion, and begged him "not to forget them"; then, having seen his guest off, he remarked with dignity to his man that it would n't be a bad thing for him to cut his hair—and, without awaiting an answer, he returned to his chamber with an anxious air, and with the same anxious air seated himself on the divan, and immediately lapsed into innocent slumber.

"Thou art somewhat pale to-day,"—said Neníla Makárievna to her daughter on the evening of the same day.—"Art thou well?"

"I am well, mamma."

Neníla Makárievna adjusted her kerchief on her neck.

"Thou art very pale; look at me,"—she went on with that maternal anxiety, in which, nevertheless, parental authority is audible:—"there, now, and thine eyes are not merry. Thou art ill, Másha."

"I have a slight headache,"—said Másha, in order to make her escape in some way.

"There, now, I knew it."—Neníla Makárievna laid her hand on Másha's brow.—"But thou hast no fever."

Másha stooped down and picked up a thread from the floor.

Neníla Makárievna's arms were laid gently round Másha's slender waist.—"It seems as though thou art wishing to say something to me,"—she said affectionately, without unclasping her hands.

Másha shuddered inwardly.

"I? No, mamma."

Másha's momentary confusion did not escape the maternal notice.

"Really, thou art . . . . Just reflect."

But Másha had succeeded in regaining her composure, and, instead of a reply, she kissed her mother's hand with a laugh.

"And thou dost not mean to say that thou hast nothing to say to me?"

"Why, really, I have nothing."

"I believe thee,"—replied Neníla Makárievna,

after a brief silence.—" I know that thou hast no secrets from me. . . . Is n't that true? "

" Of course, mamma."

Yet Másha could not help blushing faintly.

" And thou doest well. It would be sinful for thee to have secrets from me. . . . For thou knowest how I love thee, Másha."

" Oh, yes, mamma! "

And Másha nestled up to her.

" Come, that will do; enough of that."—(Neníla Makárievna paced the room.)—" But, come, tell me,"—she continued in the voice of a person who is conscious that his question has no special significance:—" what wert thou talking about to-day with Avdyéi Ivánovitch? "

" With Avdyéi Ivánovitch? "—repeated Másha, calmly.—" Why, about everything. . . ."

" And dost thou like him? "

" Of course I do."

" And dost thou remember how anxious thou wert to make his acquaintance, how agitated thou wert? "

Másha turned away, and began to laugh.

" What a strange person he is! "—remarked Neníla Makárievna good-naturedly.

Másha wanted to take up the cudgels for Lutchkóff, but bit her little tongue.

" Yes, of course,"—she said with considerable carelessness:—" he is eccentric, but he is a fine man, nevertheless! "

"Oh, yes! . . . . Why did n't Feódor Feódorovitch come?"

"Evidently he was not well. Akh, yes! by the way: Feódor Feódorovitch wants to make me a present of a little dog. . . . Dost thou permit me?"

"What? To accept his gift?"

"Yes."

"Certainly."

"Well, thanks,"—said Másha.—"Thanks!"

Neníla Makárievna walked to the door, and suddenly turned back.

"And dost thou remember thy promise, Másha?"

"What promise?"

"Thou wert to tell me when thou shouldst fall in love."

"I remember."

"Well, what then? . . . Is n't it time yet?" (Másha uttered a ringing laugh.) "Come, look me in the eye."

Másha looked brightly and boldly at her mother.

"It cannot be!" thought Neníla Makárievna, and felt reassured.—"Why should she deceive me? . . . And what made me think so? . . . . She is still a perfect child. . . ."

She went away. . . .

"But, surely, this is a sin," thought Másha.

VI

Kíster had already gone to bed when Lutchkóff entered his room. The bully's face never expressed a *single* feeling; so it was now also:—feigned indifference, coarse joy, the consciousness of his superiority . . . a multitude of varied feelings played over his features.

"Well, what now? Well, what now?"—Kíster hastily asked him.

"Well, what indeed! I have been there. They sent their greetings to thee."

"And are they all well?"

"What should ail them?"

"Did they inquire why I did not come?"

"Yes, they inquired, I believe."

Lutchkóff stared at the ceiling and began to sing in a falsetto voice. Kíster dropped his eyes, and became pensive.

"And see here now,"—enunciated Lutchkóff, in a hoarse, sharp voice:—"here, thou art a clever fellow, a learned fellow, and, as a matter of course, thou also talkest nonsense on occasion, begging pardon for the expression."

"What then?"

"Why, this. On the subject of women, for example. How thou dost laud them! Thou readest verses about them! To thee all of them are angels. . . Nice angels!"

" I love and revere women, but . . . ."

" Well, of course, of course,"—Avdyéi interrupted him.—" I 'm not disputing with thee, seest thou. Why should I? I 'm a plain man, of course."

" I meant to say that. . . . But why dost thou, to-day in particular . . . . precisely at this time . . . . begin to talk about women? "

" Because! "—Avdyéi smiled significantly.—" Because! "

Kíster cast a penetrating glance at his friend. He thought (pure soul!) that Másha had been treating him badly; perhaps she had even tormented him, as women only know how to torment. . . .

" Thou art embittered, my poor Avdyéi, confess. . . ."

Lutchkóff roared with laughter.

" Well, there 's nothing for me to feel embittered about, apparently,"—he said, with pauses between his words, as he stroked his moustache complacently.

" No; see here, now, Fédya,"—he continued in a hortatory tone:—" I 'd just like to remark to thee that thou art mistaken on the score of women, my friend. Believe me, Fédya, they 're all alike. All one has to do is to put himself to a little trouble, to hover about them a bit, and the business is as good as done. Now, take Másha Perekátoff, for instance. . . ."

"Well!"

Lutchkóff tapped the floor with his foot, and wagged his head.

"What is there particular and attractive about me, hey? Nothing, apparently. Nothing, is there? And yet a tryst has been appointed to me for to-morrow."

Kíster half rose, propped himself on his elbow, and stared at Lutchkóff in amazement.

"At evening, in the grove . . . ." pursued Avdyéi Ivánovitch calmly.—"But don't think any wrong of it. I only did it so—because. I 'm bored, seest thou. She 's a very pretty little girl . . . . well, thinks I to myself, what 's the harm? As for marrying her, I sha'n't do that . . . . but just to recall the pleasures of my youth. I 'm not fond of fooling round with women,—but one may amuse a wench. We 'll listen to the nightingales together. That is, in reality, thy business; but, seest thou, that female has n't any eyes. What am I, I 'd like to know, in comparison with thee?"

Lutchkóff talked for a long time. But Kíster did not listen to him. His head was reeling. He turned white, and passed his hand over his face. Lutchkóff wriggled about in his arm-chair, half-closed his eyes, stretched himself,—and attributing Kíster's emotion to jealousy, almost choked with satisfaction. But Kíster was not tormented with jealousy: he was pained, not by the avowal

itself, but by Avdyéi's coarse thoughtlessness, his indifferent and scornful way of speaking about Másha. He continued to gaze intently at the bully—and, apparently, for the first time thoroughly scanned his features. So it was for this he had taken so much pains! So it was for this that he had sacrificed his own inclination! Here it was—the gracious action of love!

"Avdyéi . . . is it possible that thou dost not love her?"—he stammered out at last.

"Oh, innocence! Oh, Arcadia!"—retorted Avdyéi, with a malicious guffaw.

Even then the good Kíster did not give up: "Perhaps," he said to himself, "Avdyéi is incensed, and is 'putting on airs,' according to his wont" . . . . he found no new words wherewith to express his sentiments. And was not there another feeling concealed in him—in Kíster—beneath his indignation? Was it not because the matter concerned Másha that Lutchkóff's confession had struck him so unpleasantly? How did he know—perhaps Lutchkóff really was in love with her? . . . But no! No! A thousand times no! That man in love? . . . That detestable man, with his bilious and sallow face, with his spasmodic and cat-like movements, and his throat swelling with delight . . . . disgusting! No, not with such words would Kíster have uttered to his devoted friend the secret of his love. . . . . In excess of happiness, with dumb rap-

ture, with brilliant, copious tears in his eyes, he would have clasped him to his breast.

"Well, brother?"—said Avdyéi: "thou didst not expect this—admit it! And now thou art vexed? Hey? Thou art envious? Confess, Fédya! Hey? Hey? For, seest thou, I 've snatched the wench away from under thy very nose!"

Kíster wanted to express his feelings, but turned his face to the wall.—"Explain myself . . . . before him? Not on any account!" he whispered to himself. "He does not understand me . . . . let it go! He takes it for granted that there are only vile feelings in me—let him! . . . ."

Avdyéi rose.

"I see that thou art sleepy,"—he said with feigned sympathy:—"I will not hinder thee. Sleep peacefully, my friend . . . . sleep!"

And Lutchkóff left the room, extremely pleased with himself.

Kíster could not get to sleep until daybreak. With feverish persistency he turned over and thought over one and the same thought—an occupation but too familiar to unhappy lovers; it acts on the soul like bellows on smouldering coals.

"Even if Lutchkóff is indifferent to her," he thought:—"even if she has thrown herself at his head, nevertheless, he ought not to have spoken so disrespectfully, so insultingly of her even to me, to his friend! How is she to blame? How

can one help pitying the poor, inexperienced young girl?

"But can it be that she has appointed a tryst with him? She has—she really has. Avdyéi is not lying; he never lies. But perhaps it is only a fancy on her part. . . .

"But she does not know him. . . . He is capable of insulting her, I think. After what has happened to-day, I can answer for nothing. . . . And was n't it you yourself, Mr. Kíster, who lauded and exalted him? Was n't it you yourself who excited her curiosity? . . . But who could have known? Who could have foreseen this? . . .

"Foreseen what? Is it long since he ceased to be my friend? . . . But enough of that; has he ever been my friend? What a disenchantment! What a lesson!"

The whole past gyrated in a whirlwind before Kíster's eyes. "Yes, I have loved him," he whispered at last.—"Why have I ceased to love him? So speedily? . . . . And have I ceased to love him? No. Why did I take a fancy to him? I alone?"

Kíster's loving heart had attached itself to Avdyéi precisely because all the others shunned him. But the kind young man did not himself know how great was his kindness.

"It is my duty"—he went on—"to warn Márya Sergyéevna. But how? What right have

I to meddle in other people's affairs, in other people's love? How do I know what sort of love it is? Perhaps, even in Lutchkóff himself . . . . . No!" he said aloud, with vexation, almost with tears, as he adjusted his pillows:—"that man is a stone. . . .

"I myself am to blame. . . . I have lost my friend. . . . A nice friend! And she is nice! . . . What a hateful egoist I am! No! No! From the depths of my soul I wish them happiness. . . . Happiness! and he jeers at her! . . . And why does he dye his moustache? Really, now, it seems as though . . . . Akh, how ridiculous I am!"—he kept repeating to himself, as he fell asleep.

VII

The next morning Kíster drove to the Perekátoffs'. When they met, Kíster perceived a great change in Másha, and Másha also found him changed; but both held their peace. They both felt awkward the whole morning, contrary to their wont. At home Kíster had prepared a large stock of ambiguous speeches and hints, of friendly counsels . . . . but all these preparations proved to be utterly useless. Másha dimly felt that Kíster was watching her; it seemed to her that he intentionally uttered some words in a significant manner; but she also felt conscious

of the existence of agitation within herself, and did not trust her observations. "I do hope he will not take it into his head to stay until evening!" she kept incessantly thinking, and she tried to make him understand that he was not wanted. On his side, Kíster accepted her awkwardness, her trepidation, for visible tokens of love, and the more he feared for her, the less could he make up his mind to speak of Lutchkóff, while Másha persistently abstained from alluding to him. Poor Feódor Feódorovitch was in a painful position. He had begun, at last, to understand his own feelings. Never had Másha appeared to him more charming. Evidently, she had not slept all night. A slight flush had started forth in blotches on her pale face; her form was slightly bowed; an involuntary, languid smile never left her lips; now and then a shiver ran over her shoulders, which had grown pallid; her glances kindled softly and swiftly died out. . . Neníla Makárievna sat down beside them and, possibly with deliberate intent, mentioned Avdyéi Ivánovitch. But Másha, in the presence of her mother, was armed *jusqu'aux dents,* as the French say, and did not betray herself in the least. Thus passed the whole morning.

"You will dine with us?"—Neníla Makárievna asked Kíster.

Másha turned away.

"No,"—enunciated Kíster, hastily, with a

glance at Másha.—"You must excuse me . . . the obligations of the service. . ."—Neníla Makárievna expressed her regret, as was proper; following her example, Mr. Perekátoff expressed something or other. "I do not wish to be in any one's way," Kíster wanted to say to Másha, as he passed her, but instead, he bent forward and whispered: "May you be happy . . . farewell . . . beware . . ." and disappeared.

Másha heaved a sigh from the bottom of her soul, and then felt frightened at his departure. What was it that was torturing her? Love or curiosity? God knows; but we repeat: curiosity was sufficient to ruin Eve.

VIII

A BROAD, level field on the right side of the little river Snyézhinka, about a verst distant from the Perekátoffs' estate, bore the name of Long Meadow. The left bank, all covered with thick, young oak-scrub, rose steeply above the river, which was almost overgrown with willow-bushes, with the exception of small "creeks," the haunt of wild ducks. Half a verst from the river, in this same Long Meadow, began sloping, undulating hillocks, here and there studded with ancient birches, hazel- and viburnum-bushes.

The sun had set. A mill was whirring and clattering in the distance, now loudly, now more

softly, according to the wind. The gentry's drove of horses was wandering idly through the meadow; the shepherd was strolling along, singing, behind his greedy and timorous sheep; the sheep-dogs were chasing crows out of pure tedium. Through the grove, with his arms folded, strode Lutchkóff. More than once already his tethered horse had responded impatiently to the ringing neighs of the colts and mares. Avdyéi was raging and quailing, as was his wont. Still unconvinced of Másha's love, he was already furiously angry with her, and irritated at himself . . . . but the emotion in him overwhelmed the vexation. He halted at last, in front of a wide-spreading hazel-bush, and began with his riding-whip to flick off the outermost leaves. . . .

He heard a faint noise . . . . he raised his head. . . . Ten paces from him stood Másha, all rosy with her swift walk, wearing a hat but no gloves, in a white gown, with a kerchief hastily knotted about her neck. She hastily dropped her eyes and swayed softly.

Avdyéi approached her clumsily and with a constrained smile.

"How happy I am . . ." he was beginning, almost inaudibly.

"I am very glad . . . . to meet you, . . ." Másha interrupted him, panting.—"I generally take a stroll here in the evening . . . . and you . . . ."

But Lutchkóff did not even understand how to spare her modesty, to back up her innocent lie.

"I think, Márya Sergyéevna,"—he said with dignity,—"that you yourself were pleased to . . ."

"Yes . . . . yes . . . ." returned Másha, hastily. "You wished to see me; you wanted to . . . ." Her voice had died away.

Lutchkóff maintained silence. Másha timidly raised her eyes.

"Excuse me," he began, without looking at her:—"I am a plain man and am not in the habit of explaining myself . . . . with ladies. . . . . I . . . . wanted to speak to you . . . . but, you are not inclined to listen to me, I think. . . ."

"Speak. . . ."

"You command. . . . Well, then, I will say to you frankly, that this long time, ever since I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance . . . ."

Avdyéi paused. Másha waited for him to finish his speech.

"However, I do not know why I am saying all this to you. . . . One cannot alter his fate. . . ."

"How do you know? . . ."

"I do know!"—responded Avdyéi, gloomily. —"I am accustomed to encounter its blows!"

It seemed to Másha that now, at least, Lutchkóff had no occasion to complain of his fate.

"There are kind people in the world,"—she remarked with a smile:—"even too kind. . . ."

"I understand you, Márya Sergyéevna, and, believe me, I know how to value your affection. . . . . I . . . . I . . . . You will not be angry?"

"No. . . . What is it that you wish to say?"

"I wish to say . . . . that I like you . . . . Márya Sergyéevna . . . . that I like you very much. . . ."

"I am very grateful to you,"—Másha interrupted him in confusion; her heart contracted with anticipation and with terror.—"Akh, look, Mr. Lutchkóff,"—she went on,—"look, what a view!"

She pointed to the meadow, all streaked with long, evening shadows, all crimson in the sunlight.

Inwardly delighted at the unexpected change in the conversation, Lutchkóff began to "admire" the view. He was standing by Másha's side. . . .

"Do you love nature?"—she suddenly asked, swiftly turning her head and looking at him with that friendly, curious and soft glance which, like a ringing voice, is given only to young girls.

"Yes . . . nature . . . . of course . . . ." stammered Avdyéi.—"Of course . . . . it is pleasant to stroll in the evening, although, I must

confess, that I am a soldier, and softness is n't in my line."

Lutchkóff was given to frequently repeating that he was a " soldier." A brief silence ensued. Másha continued to gaze at the meadow.

" Shall not I go away? "—thought Avdyéi.—" What nonsense! Be bolder! . . . Márya Sergyéevna . . . ."—he began with a fairly firm voice.

Másha turned her head.

" Excuse me,"—he began, as though jesting:—" but permit me on my side to inquire what you think of me; whether you feel any . . . . you know . . . . inclination toward my person? "

" Good heavens, how clumsy he is! " said Másha to herself.—" Do you know, Mr. Lutchkóff,"—she answered him with a smile,—" that it is not always easy to give a definite reply to a definite question? "

" But . . . ."

" But why do you ask? "

" Why, good gracious, I want to know. . . ."

" But . . . . is it true that you are a great duellist? Tell me, is it true? "—said Másha, with timid curiosity.—" They say that you have killed more than one man already."

" That has happened,"—returned Avdyéi, indifferently, and stroked his moustache.

Másha gazed intently at him.

" With this hand here . . . ." she whispered.

In the meantime, the blood had begun to wax hot in Lutchkóff. For more than a quarter of an hour already a pretty young girl had been moving about before him. . . .

"Márya Sergyéevna,"—he began again in a sharp, strange voice,—"you know my feelings now, you know why I wished to see you. . . . You have been so kind. . . . Now do you tell me, at last, what I may hope for. . . ."

Másha was twirling a wild pink in her hands. . . . . She darted a sidelong glance at Lutchkóff, blushed, smiled, and said:—"What nonsense you are talking!" and gave him the flower.

Avdyéi seized her hand.

"So you love me!"—he exclaimed.

Másha turned cold all over with terror. She had had no thought of confessing love to Avdyéi; she herself did not yet know for a surety whether she loved him, and here he was forestalling her, forcibly making her speak out—he could not have understood her. . . . This thought flashed through Másha's mind more quickly than lightning. She had not in the least expected so speedy a conclusion. . . . Másha, like a curious child, had been asking herself all day: "Is it possible that Lutchkóff loves me?" She had been dreaming of a pleasant evening stroll, tender and respectful speeches; she had mentally coquetted, had tamed her savage, had permitted him, at

parting, to kiss her hand . . . . and instead of that . . . .

Instead of that, she suddenly felt Avdyéi's stiff moustache on her cheek. . . .

" Let us be happy," he whispered:—" for there is but one happiness on earth! . . . ."

Másha shuddered, sprang aside in affright, all pale, and halted, with her hand resting against a birch-tree. Avdyéi was terribly confused.

" Forgive me,"—he stammered, moving toward her:—" I really did not think . . . ."

Másha stared at him in silence, with all her eyes. . . .

His lips curled in a disagreeable smile . . . . red spots started out on his face. . . .

" What are you afraid of?"—he went on. " What a fuss about nothing! For between us everything is already . . . . you know . . . ."

Másha made no reply.

" Come, stop that! . . . . What folly is this? It 's only . . . ."

Lutchkóff stretched out his hand toward her. . .

Másha recalled Kíster and his " Beware!" nearly fainted with terror, and began to scream in a decidedly shrill voice:

" Tániusha! "

From behind a hazel-bush popped forth the round face of her maid. . . . Avdyéi completely lost himself. Reassured by the presence of her servant, Másha did not stir from the spot. But

the bully began to quiver all over with a fit of wrath; his eyes grew narrow; he clenched his fists, and began to laugh loudly and convulsively.

"Bravo! Bravo! 'T is clever—there 's no denying that!"—he shouted.

Másha was petrified.

"I see that you have taken all measures of precaution, Márya Sergyéevna! Precaution never comes amiss. Who ever heard of such a thing? Nowadays the young ladies are more sharp-sighted than the old men. There 's love for you!"

"I do not know, Mr. Lutchkóff, who has given you the right to speak of love . . . . of what sort of love?"

"Who, did you say? Why, you yourself!" —Lutchkóff interrupted her.—There it was again: he was conscious that he was ruining the whole business, but he could not restrain himself.

"I have acted thoughtlessly,"—said Másha. . . . "I condescended to your entreaty with confidence in your *délicatesse* . . . . but you do not understand French—in your courtesy. . . ."

Avdyéi turned pale. Másha had struck him straight in the heart!

"I don't understand French . . . possibly; but I do understand . . . . I do understand that it has pleased you to make sport of me."

"Not at all, Avdyéi Ivánovitch. . . . I am even very sorry for you."

"Please do not talk about your compassion," —Avdyéi interrupted her testily:—"you may, at least, spare me that!"

"Mr. Lutchkóff . . . ."

"And be so good as not to look like a duchess. . . 'T is labour wasted! You can't frighten me!"

Másha retreated a pace, wheeled swiftly round, and walked away.

"Do you command me to send you your friend, your shepherd, the sentimental Lovey-dovey Kíster?"—Avdyéi shouted after her. He had lost his head.—"Is n't he thy friend? . . . ."

Másha did not answer him, and beat a hasty, a joyful retreat. She felt at ease, in spite of the alarm and agitation. She seemed to have awakened from a painful dream, to have emerged from a dark chamber into the air and sunlight. . . . Avdyéi, like a fanatic, stared around him, with dumb rage broke off a young sapling, sprang on his horse, and dug his spurs into it so viciously, so pitilessly twisted and tugged at the bridle, that the unhappy animal, after galloping eight versts in a quarter of an hour, came near dying that same night. . .

Kíster waited in vain until midnight for Lutchkóff, and on the following morning he went to him. The orderly informed Feódor Feódorovitch that his master was asleep, and had given orders that no one was to be admitted.

"Not even me?"—"Not even your Well-Born."—Kíster walked the length of the street twice in torturing uneasiness, then went home. His man handed him a note.

"From whom is it?"

"From the Perekátoffs, sir. Artyómka, the valet, brought it."

Kíster's hands trembled.

"They ordered their compliments to be presented to you. They requested an answer. Do you command that vodka be given to Artyómka, sir?"

Kíster slowly unfolded the note, and read the following:

DEAR, KIND FEÓDOR FEÓDOROVITCH!

I want very, very much to see you. Come to-day, if you can. Do not refuse my request, I beg of you, in the name of our old friendship. If you only knew . . . . but you shall know all. *Au revoir*—is it not?

MARIE.

P. S. Be sure to come to-day.

"And do you command, sir, that vodka be given to Artyómka, the valet?"

Kíster stared for a long time, with amazement, into his man's face, and left the room without uttering a word.

"The master has commanded to give thee vodka, and has commanded me to have a drink with thee,"—said Kíster's man to Artyómka, the valet.

IX

When Kíster entered the drawing-room, Másha came to meet him with so bright and noble a face, pressed his hand so firmly and in so friendly a manner, that his heart began to beat violently with joy, and a stone was rolled away from his breast. But Másha said not a word to him, and immediately left the room. Sergyéi Sergyéevitch was sitting on the divan, and laying out a game of patience. A conversation began. Before Sergyéi Sergyéevitch had managed, according to his habit, to bring the subject round to his dog in circuitous fashion, Másha re-entered with a plaid silk sash on her gown,—Kíster's favourite sash. Neníla Makárievna made her appearance and welcomed Feódor Feódorovitch cordially. At dinner they all laughed and jested; even Sergyéi Sergyéevitch grew animated, and narrated one of the merriest pranks of his boyhood, —and as he did so, he hid his head from his wife, like an ostrich.

"Let us go for a walk, Feódor Feódorovitch," —said Másha to Kíster after dinner, with that affectionate authority in her voice which seems to know that you will be glad to obey it.—"I must have a chat with you about an important, a very important matter,"—she added, with graceful solemnity, as she drew on her

suède gloves.—"Wilt thou come with us, *maman?*"

"No,"—replied Neníla Makárievna.

"But we will not go into the park."

"Where then?"

"To the Long Meadow, to the grove."

"Take Tániusha with you."

"Tániusha, Tániusha!"—cried Másha, ringingly, as she fluttered out of the room more lightly than a bird.

A quarter of an hour later Másha was walking with Kíster in the Long Meadow. As they passed the herd, she fed her favourite cow with bread, patted her head, and made Kíster pet her. Másha was merry, and chattered a great deal. Kíster willingly fell in with her mood, although he was impatiently awaiting an explanation. . . . . Tániusha walked behind at a respectful distance, and only now and then cast a sly glance at her young mistress.

"You are not vexed with me, Feódor Feódorovitch?"—asked Másha.

"At you, Márya Sergyéevna? Good heavens, for what?"

"Day before yesterday . . . do you remember?"

"You were out of sorts . . . . that is all."

"Why are we walking apart? Give me your arm. There, that 's right. . . And you were out of sorts, too."

"So I was."

"But to-day I am in good spirits, am I not?"

"Yes, to-day I think you are. . . ."

"And do you know why? Because . . ."—Másha nodded her head gravely.—"Well, I know why. . . . Because I am with you,"—she added, without looking at Kíster.

Kíster gently pressed her arm.

"But why don't you question me? . . ." said Másha in a low voice.

"What about?"

"Come, don't pretend . . . . about my letter."

"I was waiting. . . ."

"That 's why I feel so cheerful with you,"—Másha interrupted him with vivacity:—"because you are a kind, tender man; because you are incapable of . . . *parce que vous avez de la délicatesse.* One can say that to you; you understand French."

Kíster did understand French, but he positively did not understand Másha.

"Pluck that flower for me—that one yonder . . . how pretty it is!"—Másha admired it, and all of a sudden, swiftly freeing her arm, she began, with an anxious smile, cautiously to thrust the supple stem through the buttonhole of Kíster's coat. Her slender fingers almost touched his lips. He gazed at those fingers, then at her. She nodded her head, as much as to say: "You may . . ." Kíster bent down, and kissed the tips of her gloves. . .

In the meantime, they had drawn near the familiar grove. Másha suddenly became more pensive, and at last fell silent altogether. They came to the very spot where Lutchkóff had waited for her. The trampled grass had not yet succeeded in lifting itself; the broken sapling had already withered, its leaves had already begun to curl up into tubes and dry. Másha swept a glance around, and suddenly turned to Kíster.

"Do you know why I have brought you hither?"

"No, I do not know."

"You don't know? . . . Because you have said nothing to me to-day about your friend Mr. Lutchkóff. You have always praised him. . . ."

Kíster dropped his eyes and remained silent.

"Do you know,"—enunciated Másha, not without an effort:—"that I appointed with him . . . a tryst . . . . here . . . yesterday evening?"

"I knew it,"—replied Kíster, dully.

"You knew it? . . . Ah! now I understand why, the day before yesterday . . . . Mr. Lutchkóff, evidently, made haste to boast of his *conquest.*"

Kíster made an attempt to reply. . . .

"Don't speak; don't make me any answer. . . . . I know—he is your friend; you are capable of defending him. You knew, Kíster, you knew. . . How is it that you did not prevent

my perpetrating such a piece of folly? Why did n't you pull my ears, as though I had been a child? You knew . . . . and you did not care?"

"But what right had I? . . ."

"What right! . . . . The right of a friend. But he is your friend. . . . I am ashamed, Kíster. . . He is your friend. . . That man treated me yesterday so . . . ."

Másha turned away. Kíster's eyes flashed; he turned pale.

"Come, enough, don't get angry. . . . Do you hear me, Feódor Feódorovitch, don't get angry. Everything is for the best. I am very glad of yesterday's explanation . . . precisely that—explanation,"—added Másha.—"For what purpose, think you, have I spoken to you about this? In order to complain of Mr. Lutchkóff? Not at all! I have forgotten all about him. But I am to blame toward you, my kind friend. . . I want to explain myself, to beg your forgiveness . . . your advice. You have taught me to be frank; I am at my ease with you. . . . You are not a Mr. Lutchkóff!"

"Lutchkóff is awkward and rough,"—said Kíster with difficulty:—"but . . ."

"What is that *but?* Are n't you ashamed to say '*but*'? He is rough, *and* awkward, *and* malicious, *and* self-conceited. . . *And,* do you hear? not *but.*"

"You are speaking under the influence of wrath, Márya Sergyéevna,"—said Kíster, sadly.

"Wrath? What sort of wrath? Look at me: is this the way people look when they are wrathful? Listen,"—pursued Másha:—"think of me as you will . . . . but if you imagine that I am coquetting to-day with you out of revenge, then—then . . . ." Tears welled up in her eyes:—"Then I shall be seriously angry."

"Be frank with me, Márya Sergyéevna. . . ."

"Oh, you stupid man! Oh, dull-witted one! Why, look at me. Am not I frank with you? Don't you see through and through me?"

"Very well . . . . yes; I believe you,"—went on Kíster with a smile, seeing with what anxious persistence she sought his gaze;—"but come now, tell me, what prompted you to appoint a meeting with Lutchkóff?"

"What? I don't know myself. He wanted to talk with me alone. It seemed to me that he had not yet had time, or the opportunity to say all he wished. Now he has spoken out! Listen! Perhaps he is a remarkable man, but he is—stupid; really he is. . . He does n't know how to utter two words. He 's—downright discourteous. However, I do not blame him so very much . . . he may have thought that I was a giddy, crazy little girl. I had hardly ever talked with him. . . . . He really did arouse my curiosity, but I

imagined that a man who deserved to be your friend . . . ."

" Please do not speak of him as my friend,"—Kíster interrupted her.

" No, no, I don't want to bring about a quarrel between you."

" Oh, my God, for your sake I am ready to sacrifice not only my friend, but even . . . . Between me and Mr. Lutchkóff all is at an end!" —added Kíster, hastily. Másha gazed intently into his face.

" Well, I 've done with him!"—said she.— " Let us not talk of him. It is a lesson to me for the future. I myself am to blame. For several months in succession I have seen almost every day a kind, clever, merry, affectionate man, who . . . ." Másha became confused and hesitated:—" who, I think, also . . . liked me . . . a little . . . and I, the stupid,"—she added quickly,—" preferred to him . . . . no, no, did not prefer, but . . . ."

She bent her head, and fell silent with confusion.

Kíster was startled.—" It cannot be!"—he kept reiterating to himself.

" Márya Sergyéevna!"—he said at last.

Másha raised her head and let her eyes rest on him, burdened with unshed tears.

" You do not guess of whom I am speaking?" she asked.

Hardly breathing, Kíster extended his hand. Másha immediately grasped it with fervour.

"You are my friend, as before, are you not?" . . . Why do not you answer?"

"I am your friend, you know that,"—he stammered.

"And you do not condemn me? . . . you understand me? You will not laugh at a girl who yesterday appointed a rendezvous for one man, and to-day is already talking with another as I am talking with you. . . . You will not laugh at me, will you?" . . . Másha's face reddened; with both hands she clung to Kíster's hand. . . .

"Laugh at you,"—replied Kíster:—"I . . . . I . . . . why, I love you . . . . I love you!"—he exclaimed.

Másha covered her face.

"Is it possible that you have not known this long time, Márya Sergyéevna, that I love you?"

X

THREE weeks after this interview, Kíster was sitting alone in his room, and writing the following letter to his mother:

DEAR MAMMA:

I hasten to share with you a great joy; I am going to be married. This news will probably surprise you only because, in my previous letters, I have not even

hinted at such a grave change in my life,—but you know that I am in the habit of sharing with you all my feelings, my joys and my sorrows. It is easy for me to explain to you the cause of my silence. In the first place, I only recently learned myself that I am beloved; and, in the second place, on my side, I as recently felt the full power of my own attachment. In one of my first letters from here, I spoke to you of the Perekátoffs, our neighbours; I am going to marry their only daughter, Márya. I am firmly convinced that we shall both be happy; she has excited in me not a momentary passion, but a deep, genuine feeling, in which friendship is combined with love. Her cheerful, gentle disposition entirely corresponds to my inclinations. She is cultured, clever, plays beautifully on the piano. . . . If you could only see her!! I send you her portrait, sketched by myself. It is unnecessary to say, I think, that she is a hundred times better than her portrait. Másha already loves you like a daughter, and is impatiently awaiting the day of meeting you. I intend to retire from the service, settle down in the country, and busy myself with agriculture. The old man Perekátoff has four hundred serfs in excellent condition. You see, that from the material point of view also, it is impossible not to laud my decision. I shall get a leave of absence, and go to Moscow and to you. Expect me a fortnight hence, not later. My dear, good mamma —how happy I am! . . . . Embrace me". . . . and so forth.

Kíster folded and sealed his letter, rose, went to the window, lighted his pipe, reflected a while,

and returned to the table. He got a small sheet of paper, carefully dipped his pen in the ink, but for a long time did not begin to write, contracted his brows, raised his eyes to the ceiling, nibbled the end of his pen. . . . At last he made up his mind—and in the course of a quarter of an hour, he had composed the following missive:

Dear Sir,

Avdyéi Ivánovitch:

Ever since the day of your last call (that is to say, for the last three weeks), you have not bowed to me, have not spoken to me, and seem to avoid meeting me. Every man is, indisputably, free to act as he likes; it has suited you to break off our acquaintance—and I, believe me, am not appealing to you with a complaint against you; I have no intention, and am not accustomed to force myself on any one whomsoever; the consciousness of my own uprightness is sufficient for me. I write to you now from a sense of duty. I have proposed to Márya Sergyéevna Perekátoff, and have received her consent, and also the consent of her parents. I impart this information—directly and immediately to *you*, with a view to avoiding all misunderstandings and suspicions. I frankly confess to you, my dear sir, that I cannot care overmuch for the opinion of a man who himself pays not the slightest heed to the opinions and feelings of other people, and I write to you solely because, in this case, I do not wish to appear to have acted or to be acting stealthily. I venture to say, that you know me, and will not ascribe to my present act any other, any evil significance. Speaking to you now, for the last

time, I cannot refrain from wishing you, in memory of our former friendship, all possible earthly blessings.

With sincere respect, I remain, my dear sir,

Your humble servant,

Feódor Kíster.

Feódor Feódorovitch despatched this note to its address, dressed himself, and ordered his calash to be brought round. Cheerful and care-free he strode about his little chamber, humming; he even gave a couple of skips, twisted a copy-book of romances into a tube, and tied it up with blue ribbon. . . . The door opened—and in his coat, devoid of epaulets, with his cap on his head, Lutchkóff entered. The astounded Kíster came to a halt in the middle of the room, without having finished tying the bow.

"You are going to marry the Perekátoff girl?"—asked Avdyéi in a calm voice.

Kíster flared up.

"My dear sir,"—he began:—"on entering a room, decent people take off their caps and say good morning."

"Excuse me, sir," retorted the bully, abruptly, and removed his cap.—"Good morning."

"Good morning, Mr. Lutchkóff. You ask me whether I am going to marry Miss Perekátoff? Have n't you read my letter?"

"I have read your letter. You are going to be married. I congratulate you."

" I accept your congratulations and thank you. But I must go."

" I should like to have an explanation with you, Feódor Feódorovitch."

" Certainly, with pleasure,"—replied the good-natured fellow.—" I must confess that I have been expecting this explanation. Your conduct toward me has been so strange, and I, on my side, I think, have not deserved . . . . at least, I had no reason to expect . . . . But will not you sit down? Will not you have a pipe? "

Lutchkóff sat down. Languor was perceptible in all his movements. He twitched his moustache and elevated his eyebrows.

" Tell me, Feódor Feódorovitch,"—he began at last:—" why did you dissemble so long with me? "

" What do you mean by that? "

" Why did you pretend to be such a . . . such an immaculate creature, when you are just such another man as the rest of us sinners? "

" I do not understand you. . . . Have I offended you in any way? " . . . .

" You do not understand me . . . let us say. I will try to speak more plainly. Tell me, for example, frankly: is it long that you have felt an inclination for Miss Perekátoff, or have you flamed up suddenly with passion? "

" I should prefer not to talk with you, Avdyéi

Iványitch, about my relations to Márya Sergyéevna,"—replied Kíster, coldly.

"Just so, sir. As you please. Only, do me the favour to allow me to think that you have deceived me."

Avdyéi spoke very slowly, and with pauses between his words.

"You cannot think that, Avdyéi Iványitch. You know me. . . ."

"I know you? . . . who knows you? Another man's soul is a dark forest, and wares are judged by their appearance. I know that you read German poems with great feeling, and even with tears in your eyes; I know that you have hung various geographical maps on the walls of your quarters; I know that you keep your person neat; I know this . . . . and I know nothing more."

Kíster began to wax wroth.

"Permit me to inquire,"—he asked at last:—"what is the object of your visit? You have not bowed to me for three weeks, and now you have come to me, apparently with the intention of jeering at me. I am not a small boy, my dear sir, and I will not allow any one . . . ."

"Good gracious,"—Lutchkóff interrupted him:—"good gracious, Feódor Feódorovitch, who would dare to jeer at you? On the contrary, I came to you with a most humble entreaty; namely: do me the favour to explain to me *your* treatment of me. Allow me to ask, was it not

you who forcibly made me acquainted with the Perekátoff family? Was it not you who assured your humble servant that he was blossoming out in soul? Was it not you, in conclusion, who brought me and the virtuous Márya Sergyéevna together? Why should not I assume that I am indebted to *you* for that last agreeable explanation, of which you have, probably, been duly informed? Of course, a betrothed bride tells her bridegroom everything, especially her *innocent* pranks. Why should not I think that it was thanks to you, that I got so magnificently ridiculed? You have taken so much interest in my 'blossoming,' you see."

Kíster paced the room.

"Hearken to me, Lutchkóff,"—he said at last:—"if you really, without jesting, are convinced of what you say,—which, I must confess, I do not believe,—then permit me to say to you: it is a sin and a shame for you to interpret my actions and my intentions so offensively. I will not defend myself . . . . I appeal to your own conscience, to your memory."

"Yes; I remember that you were incessantly whispering with Márya Sergyéevna. Over and above that, permit me to inquire again of you: were not you at the Perekátoffs' after a certain conversation with me? After that evening, when, I, like a fool, blabbed to you, to my best friend, about the rendezvous appointed to me?"

"What! You suspect me of . . . ."

"I suspect no one else of anything,"—Avdyéi interrupted him with deadly coldness,—"of which I do not suspect myself; but I also have the weakness to think that other people are no better than I am."

"You are mistaken,"—retorted Kíster, hotly; —"other people are better than you."

"On which I have the honour to congratulate them," calmly remarked Lutchkóff: "but . . . ."

"But,"—broke in the irritated Kíster in his turn:—"remember, what expressions you used in speaking of . . . . that meeting, of . . . . However, these explanations lead to nothing, I see. . . . Think of me as you see fit, and act as you like."

"There now, that 's better,"—remarked Avdyéi.—"At last we have begun to talk frankly."

"As you like!"—repeated Kíster.

"I understand your position, Feódor Feódorovitch,"—pursued Avdyéi with feigned sympathy.—"It is disagreeable, really disagreeable. A man has played, and played a part, and no one has detected the actor in him; all of a sudden . . . ."

"If I could think,"—Kíster interrupted him, setting his teeth;—"that wounded love was now speaking in you, I might feel compassion for you, I might excuse you. . . . But in your re-

proaches, in your calumnies, merely the shriek of injured vanity is audible . . . . and I feel no pity whatever for you. . . . You have deserved your fate."

"Phew! my God, how the man does talk!"—remarked Avdyéi in an undertone.—"Vanity,"—he went on:—"perhaps so; yes, yes, the vanity in me was deeply, intolerably wounded, as you say. But who is there that is not vain? Not you, surely? Yes, I am vain, and, for example, I will not permit any one to pity me. . . ."

"You will not permit?"—retorted Kíster, haughtily.—"What an expression, my dear sir! Do not forget: the bond between us was broken by you yourself. I beg that you will treat me as you would a stranger."

"Broken! The bond was broken!"—repeated Avdyéi—"understand me: I have not bowed to you, and have not been to see you, out of compassion for you; for you will allow me to pity you, if you pity me! . . . I did not wish to place you in a false position, to awake in you the gnawing of conscience. . . . You speak of our bond . . . . as though you could remain my friend as of yore after your marriage! Enough of that! You only associated with me before for the sake of comforting yourself with your imaginary superiority. . . ."

Avdyéi's bad faith had exhausted, had irritated Kíster.

"Let us put an end to this unpleasant conversation!"—he exclaimed at last.—"I must confess, that I do not understand why it has pleased you to favour me with a call."

"You do not understand why I came to you?"—inquired Avdyéi with curiosity.

"I positively do not understand."

"No—o?"

"No, I tell you. . . ."

"Amazing! . . . This is amazing! Who would have expected this from a man with your brains?"

"Well, then, be so good as to explain, in short. . . ."

"I came, Mr. Kíster,"—said Avdyéi, slowly rising from his seat:—"I came to challenge you to a duel, do you understand? I want to fight with you. Ah! You thought you were going to get rid of me so easily? But did n't you know with what sort of a man you had to deal? Would I permit . . . ."

"Very good, sir,"—Kíster interrupted him coldly and curtly.—"I accept your challenge. Be so good as to send your second to me."

"Yes, yes,"—went on Avdyéi, who, like a cat, was loath to release his victim so speedily;—"I must admit that I shall take great pleasure to-morrow in aiming the muzzle of my pistol at your fair and ideal face."

"You are employing opprobrious language

after the challenge, I believe," retorted Kíster, scornfully.—" Be so good as to leave the room. I am ashamed for you."

" We know all about that *délicatesse!* . . . Ah, Márya Sergyéevna! I don't understand French!"—growled Avdyéi, as he put on his cap.—" Farewell until our pleasant meeting, Feódor Feódorovitch!"

He bowed and withdrew.

Kíster strode up and down the room several times. His face was burning, his breast heaved high. He was not intimidated, and he was not angry; but it disgusted him to think what sort of a man he had once accounted his friend. He almost rejoiced at the thought of the duel with Lutchkóff. . . . To rid himself, at one stroke, of the past, to leap over that stone, and then float along on a tranquil river. . . . " Splendid!" he thought;—" I shall conquer my happiness."

Másha's image seemed to be smiling upon him and promising victory.

" I shall not perish! No, I shall not perish!" —he repeated with a calm, firm smile.

On the table lay the letter to his mother. . . . His heart contracted within him for a moment. He decided, in any case, to delay sending it off. There had taken place in Kíster that augmentation of the vital force, which a man notices in himself in the face of danger. He calmly turned over in his mind all the possible results of the

duel, mentally subjected himself and Másha to the test of unhappiness and separation—and gazed on the future with hope. He gave himself his word of honour that he would not kill Lutchkóff. . . . He felt irresistibly drawn to Másha. He hunted up a second, hastily put his affairs in order, and immediately after dinner went to the Perekátoffs'. All the evening Kíster was merry —too merry, perhaps.

Másha played a great deal on the piano, had no forebodings, and flirted charmingly with him. At first he felt aggrieved at her unconcern, later on he took that same unconcern on Másha's part for a happy augury—and rejoiced and calmed down. She was becoming more and more attached to him every day; the need for happiness was stronger in her than the need for passion. Moreover, Avdyéi had weaned her from all exaggerated desires, and she had renounced them gladly and forever. Neníla Makárievna loved Kíster like a son. Sergyéi Sergyéevitch, as was his habit, imitated his wife.

"Farewell until we meet again,"—said Másha to Kíster, as she escorted him to the anteroom, and with a quiet smile watched how long and tenderly he kissed her hand.

"Until we meet again,"—replied Feódor Feódorovitch with confidence:—"until we meet again."

But, when he had got half a verst from the

Perekátoffs' house, he half-rose in his calash, and with confused disquietude began to seek with his eyes the lighted windows. . . . Everything in the house was already as dark as in the grave.

XI

On the following day, at eleven o'clock in the morning, Kíster's second, an old, tried Major, came to him. The kind-hearted old man was growling and biting his grey moustache, and wishing every sort of harm to Avdyéi Ivánovitch. . . . The calash was brought round. Kíster handed the Major two letters, one to his mother, the other to Másha.

"What 's this for?"

"Why, one cannot tell . . ."

"What nonsense! We are going to shoot him like a partridge."

"Nevertheless, it is better. . . ."

The Major, with vexation, thrust the two letters into the side pocket of his coat.

They set off. In a small wood, a couple of versts from the village of Kirílovo, Lutchkóff was awaiting them with his second, his former friend, the perfumed regimental Adjutant. The weather was magnificent, the birds were twittering peaceably; not far from the wood a peasant was ploughing the land. While the seconds were measuring off the distance, and fixing the bar-

riers, inspecting and loading the pistols, the antagonists did not even glance at each other. Kíster, with a care-free mien, paced to and fro, twirling a branch which he had broken off; Avdyéi stood motionless, with folded arms and frowning brows. The decisive moment arrived.

"Begin, gentlemen!"

Kíster walked swiftly to the barrier, but before he had taken five steps more, Avdyéi fired. Kíster quivered, advanced another step, reeled, bowed his head. . . . His knees gave way beneath him . . . . he fell on the grass like a sack. The Major rushed to him. . . .

"Is it possible?" . . . . whispered the dying man.

Avdyéi stepped up to the man he had killed. On his gloomy and emaciated visage, fierce, exasperated pity was expressed. . . . He glanced at the Adjutant and the Major, bent his head like a culprit, silently mounted his horse, and rode at a foot-pace straight to the quarters of the Colonel.

Másha . . . . is alive at the present day.

PYETUSHKÓFF

(1847)

PYETUSHKÓFF

I

IN the year 182.., in the town of O***, dwelt Lieutenant Iván Afanásievitch Pyetushkóff. He was descended from poor parents, had been left a full orphan at the age of five years, and had fallen into the hands of a guardian. Thanks to his guardian, he turned out to have no property whatsoever; he got along as best he might. He was of medium height and stooped somewhat; he had a thin face covered with freckles, but quite pleasant, notwithstanding; dark chestnut hair, grey eyes, and a timid look; numerous wrinkles covered his low forehead. The whole of Pyetushkóff's life had passed in an extremely monotonous manner; at the age of forty he was still as young and inexperienced as a child. He shunned his acquaintances, and treated those on whose destiny he might have an influence very gently. . . .

People who are condemned by Fate to a monotonous and cheerless life often acquire divers habits and requirements. Pyetushkóff was fond of eating a fresh, white roll of a morning with his tea. Without that dainty he could not exist.

And behold, one morning, his servant, Onísim, instead of the roll, presented to him on a plate three dark-reddish rusks.[1] Pyetushkóff immediately, with some indignation, asked his servant what was the meaning of that.

"The rolls were all gone,"—answered Onísim, a native-born Petersburgian, who by the strange play of Fate, had been carried to the very wilds of southern Russia.

"Impossible!"—exclaimed Iván Afanásievitch.

"They were all gone,"—repeated Onísim;—"the Marshal of the Nobility has a breakfast today, so they all went there, you know."

Onísim swept his hand through the air and thrust forward his right leg.

Iván Afanásievitch walked through the room, dressed himself and set out in person for the baker's shop. The only establishment of that sort in O*** had been set up ten years previously by a newcomer, a German, had speedily thriven, and was still flourishing at the present time, under the management of his widow, a corpulent woman.

Pyetushkóff knocked on the window. The fat woman thrust her unhealthily-puffy and sleepy face through the hinged pane.

"Please give me a white roll,"—said Pyetushkóff, pleasantly.

[1] Zwieback.—Translator.

"We are out of rolls,"—squeaked the fat woman.

"You have no rolls?"

"No."

"How is this?—good gracious. I buy a roll from you every day and pay promptly."

The woman stared at him in silence.—"Take a cracknel,"—she said at last, with a yawn,—"or a *papliúkha.*"[1]

"I won't,"—said Pyetushkóff.

"As you like,"—mumbled the woman, and slammed to the pane.

Violent irritation seized upon Iván Afanásievitch. He retreated in perplexity to the other side of the street, and gave himself up wholly, like a child, to his displeasure.

"Sir!" . . . a fairly agreeable feminine voice rang out.—"Sir!"

Iván Afanásievitch raised his eyes. A young girl of seventeen was peering forth through the pane, and holding in her hand a white roll. She had a round, plump face, small brown eyes, a somewhat snub nose, reddish-blond hair, and magnificent shoulders. Her features were expressive of good-nature, indolence and unconcern.

"Here is a roll for you, sir,"—she said, laughing;—"I was going to take it for myself, but if you wish, I will give it up to you."

[1] A flat cake.—Translator.

"I thank you most sincerely. Permit me, ma'am. . . ."

Pyetushkóff began to fumble in his pocket.

"Never mind; it is n't necessary, sir. Eat, and may health be yours."

She closed the pane.

Pyetushkóff returned home in a thoroughly agreeable frame of mind.

"See there now, thou didst not get a roll,"—he said to his Onísim,—"but here, I have got one; seest thou? . . . ."

Onísim grinned sourly.

That same day, in the evening, Iván Afanásievitch, as he was undressing, asked his servant:

"Tell me, my good fellow, please, what girl is that yonder at the baker's, hey?"

Onísim glanced aside in a rather gloomy way, and answered:—"But why do you want to know?"

"Because,"—said Pyetushkóff, taking off his boots with his own hands.

"She 's pretty, certainly!"—remarked Onísim, condescendingly.

"Yes . . . she is n't bad-looking . . . ." said Iván Afanásievitch, also glancing aside. "And what is her name—dost thou know?"

"Vasilísa."

"And art thou acquainted with her?"

Onísim made no answer for a while.

"I am, sir."

Pyetushkóff was on the point of opening his mouth, but turned over on his other side and went to sleep. Onísim withdrew into the anteroom, took a pinch of snuff, and twisted his head round.

The next day, early in the morning, Pyetushkóff ordered his things for dressing to be given him. Onísim brought Iván Afanásievitch's everyday coat—an old coat of grass-green hue,[1] with huge, faded epaulets. Pyetushkóff stared long and silently at Onísim, then ordered him to get his new coat. Onísim obeyed, not without surprise. Pyetushkóff dressed himself, and carefully drew on his hands wash-leather gloves.

"Thou needest not go to the baker's shop today, my good fellow,"—said he. "I will go myself . . . . it is on my way."

"I obey, sir,"—replied Onísim, as abruptly as though some one had punched him in the back.

Pyetushkóff set forth, reached the baker's shop, and knocked at the little window. The fat woman opened the pane.

"A roll, if you please,"—said Iván Afanásievitch, slowly.

The fat woman stuck out her arm, bare to the very shoulder, and resembling a haunch rather than an arm, and thrust the hot bread straight under his nose.

[1] The coats of officers in the majority of infantry regiments are dark green. Dandified officers try to get the shade as dark as possible.—TRANSLATOR.

Iván Afanásievitch stood still for a while in front of the little window, paced up and down the street a couple of times, cast a glance into the courtyard, and, ashamed, at last, of his childishness, returned home with the roll in his hand. All day long he felt awkward, and even in the evening, contrary to his wont, he did not enter into conversation with Onísim.

On the following morning, also, Onísim went again for the roll.

II

Several weeks passed. Iván Afanásievitch had totally forgotten Vasilísa, and chatted in friendly wise with his servant as of yore. One fine morning, Mr. Bublítzyn dropped in to see him, —an easy-mannered and very amiable young man. Truth to tell, he sometimes did not know what he was saying, and was, as the saying is, all awry, but, nevertheless, bore the reputation of being a very agreeable companion. He smoked a great deal, with feverish eagerness, elevating his brows, drawing in his chest—smoked with a careworn expression, or, to speak more accurately, with an aspect which seemed to say, "Let me take just one more, last whiff, and I will immediately tell you an unexpected bit of news"; he even bellowed, sometimes, and waved his hand, hastily sucking at his pipe, as though

he had suddenly remembered something extremely amusing or important, opened his mouth, emitted rings of smoke, and uttered the most commonplace remarks, and sometimes maintained utter silence.

After chatting awhile with Iván Afanásievitch about the neighbours, about horses, about the young daughters of the landed proprietors, and other edifying subjects, Mr. Bublítzyn suddenly puckered up his eyes, rumpled up his crest, and, with a sly smile, stepped up to a remarkably dim mirror, the only adornment of Iván Afanásievitch's room.

"Well, now, to tell the truth,"—he enunciated, stroking his dark-brown side-whiskers,—"we have here such women of the burgher class as would put to shame your Venus of Mendintzi. . . . For example, have you seen Vasilísa the baker's girl?" . . . . Mr. Bublítzyn stretched himself.

Pyetushkóff started.

"But why do I ask you?"—pursued Bublítzyn, disappearing in a cloud of smoke,—"you 're such a queer man, Iván Afanásievitch!—God knows what you do take an interest in, Iván Afanásievitch!"

"In the same things as you do,"—said Pyetushkóff, not without irritation, and in a drawl.

"Well, no, Iván Afanásievitch, no. . . . Why do you say that?"

"But what do you mean?"

"Well, the very idea, Iván Afanásievitch!"

"But why? Why?"

Bublítzyn set his pipe in one corner, and began to inspect his not entirely handsome boots. Pyetushkóff felt embarrassed.

"Because, Iván Afanásievitch, because,"—went on Bublítzyn, as though sparing him.—"But as for Vasilísa, the baker's girl, I must inform you that she 's very, ve-ry pretty . . . . ve-ry."

Strange to relate! Iván Afanásievitch felt something akin to jealousy. He began to fidget about on his chair, he burst out laughing apropos of nothing, he suddenly blushed, yawned, and as he yawned, twisted his lower jaw somewhat. Bublítzyn smoked three pipes more and departed. Iván Afanásievitch walked to the window, sighed, and ordered his man to give him a drink.

Onísim placed a glass of kvas[1] on the table, cast a surly glance at his master, leaned his back against the door, and hung his head.

"What art thou thinking about?"—inquired his master, affectionately, and not without trepidation.

"What am I thinking about?"—retorted Onísim;—"what am I thinking about? . . . . Always about you."

[1] A sourish small beer made from sour black, rye bread, or rye meal, by pouring on water and fermenting.—TRANSLATOR.

"About me?"

"About you, of course."

"But what is it that thou art thinking?"

"Why, this is what I am thinking." (Here Onísim took a pinch of snuff.) "Shame on you, sir, shame on you."

"What have I to be ashamed of?" . . . .

"What have you to be ashamed of? . . . . Why, just look at Mr. Bublítzyn, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . Is n't he a dashing fine fellow, pray?"

"I don't understand thee, my good fellow."

"You don't understand? . . . . Yes, you do understand me."

Onísim paused.

"Mr. Bublítzyn is a real gentleman, as a gentleman should be. But what are you, Iván Afanásievitch, what are you, pray?"

"Well, I am a gentleman also."

"A gentleman, a gentleman . . ." retorted Onísim, flying into a passion.—"Do you call yourself a gentleman? You 're simply a wet hen, Iván Afanásievitch, good gracious! Here you sit by yourself the livelong day . . . much you will hatch out! You don't play cards, you don't associate with the gentry, and as for . . . ."

Onísim waved his hand with a gesture of despair.

"Well, anyhow . . . . I think thou art too

. . . ." said Iván Afanásievitch, clutching at his Turkish pipe in confusion.

"Too what, Iván Afanásievitch, too what? Judge for yourself. Here now, about that Vasilísa again. . . . Well, and why should n't you. . . ."

"But what art thou thinking about, Onísim?" —Pyetushkóff interrupted him sadly.

"I know what I 'm thinking. What then? God bless us! But how can you? Good gracious, Iván Afanásievitch, you sit by yourself... Certainly you. . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch rose to his feet.

"Come, come, please hold thy tongue,"—he said briskly, and as though challenging Onísim with his eyes.—"I also, thou knowest . . . I . . . . what dost thou mean, in fact? Thou hadst better help me to dress."

Onísim slowly pulled off Iván Afanásievitch's greasy Tatár dressing-gown, with paternal sadness gazed at his master, shook his head, got him into his tight-fitting coat, and set to beating him on the back with a dust-brush.

Pyetushkóff left the house, and after wandering for a short time through the crooked streets of the town, found himself in front of the baker's shop. A strange smile played on his lips.

Before he had time to cast a second glance at the too-familiar establishment, the wicket-gate

suddenly flew open, and Vasilísa ran out, with a yellow kerchief on her head, and a short, wadded jacket thrown over her shoulders, after the Russian fashion.[1]

"Whither dost thou deign to go, my dear?"[2]

Vasilísa cast a quick glance at him, burst out laughing, turned away, and covered her lips with her hand.

"To make purchases, I suppose?"—inquired Iván Afanásievitch, shifting from foot to foot.

"How curious you are,"—retorted Vasilísa.

"Why do you call me curious?"—said Pyetushkóff, hastily brandishing his arms.—"Quite the contrary, I . . . . I just—you know,"—he added hurriedly, as though those four words thoroughly explained his meaning.

"And did you enjoy my roll?"

"I certainly did, ma'am,"—replied Pyetushkóff:—"it gave me particular satisfaction."

Vasilísa continued to walk along and laugh.

"The weather is pleasant to-day,"—pursued Iván Afanásievitch:—"do you often go for a stroll?"

"I take a stroll sometimes, sir."

"Akh, how I wish that I . . . ."

"What, sir?"

The young girls with us pronounce the words "what, sir?" in a very strange, rather peculiarly

[1] The jacket is called, literally, a "soul warmer." "Russian fashion" means with the sleeves hanging unused.—Translator.

[2] Literally, "dear little dove."—Translator.

sharp and quick manner. . . . Partridges call thus at dawn.

"Could I walk with you, ma'am, you know, ma'am . . . . outside the town, perhaps. . . ."

"How is that possible?"

"Why is n't it possible?"

"Akh, how you do go on, really!"

"But permit me. . . ."

At this point there came hopping alongside of them a petty merchant with a goat's beard and fingers spread out in the shape of hooks to keep his sleeves from falling down, clad in a long-skirted bluish kaftan, and a warm wadded cap with a visor, which resembled a swollen watermelon. Pyetushkóff, out of decorum, dropped a little behind Vasilísa, but immediately caught up with her again.

"Well, and how is to be about the stroll, ma'am?"

Vasilísa cast a roguish glance at him, and again began to smile.

"Do you belong here in town?"

"I do, ma'am."

Vasilísa passed her hand over her hair, and walked more slowly. Iván Afanásievitch smiled, and inwardly fainting with terror, bent a little to one side, and with a tremulous arm, encircled the beauty's waist.

Vasilísa shrieked.

"Stop that, you impudent thing, on the street."

"Come, come, come, 't is nothing,"—muttered Iván Afanásievitch.

"Stop it, I tell you, in the street. . . . Don't insult me."

"A . . . . a . . . . akh, what a spit-fire you are," —said Pyetushkóff, reproachfully, and blushed to his very ears.

Vasilísa halted.

"Go your way, sir, go. . . ."

Pyetushkóff obeyed. He went home, sat for a whole hour motionless on a chair, and did not even smoke his pipe. At last he got a sheet of greyish paper, mended his pen, and after long reflection, he wrote the following letter:

Dear Madam,

Vasilísa Timofyéevna:

Not being by nature an offensive man, how could I cause you unpleasantness. But if I really am culpable toward you, then, namely, I say to you, the hints of Mr. Bublítzyn prompted me to that which I had not in the least expected.

However, I respectfully request you not to be angry with me. I am a susceptible man, and I am sensitive to every caress and am grateful. Be not angry with me, Vasilísa Timofyéevna, I entreat you most humbly. However with my respects, I remain,

Your humble servant,

Iván Pyetushkóff.

Onísim carried this letter to its address.

III

Two weeks passed. . . . Onísim went to the baker's shop every morning, according to his custom. And lo! one day, Vasilísa ran out to meet him.

"Good morning, Onísim Sergyéevitch."

Onísim assumed a surly aspect and said angrily:—"Morning."

"Why don't you ever drop in to see us, Onísim Sergyéevitch?"

Onísim glared morosely at her.

"Why should I drop in? Thou wilt not treat me to tea, I suppose?"

"I will, Onísim, I will give you tea. Only come. And with rum."

Onísim gave a slow smile.

"Well, as thou wilt, in that case."

"But when, my dear man, when?"

"When. . . . Ekh, thou . . . ."

"This evening, does that suit you? Do drop in."

"I will, if you like,"—returned Onísim, and trudged off homeward with a lazy and swaggering gait.

That same day, in the evening, in a tiny chamber, by the side of a bed covered with a striped down quilt, at a clumsy table, sat Onísim opposite Vasilísa. A huge dimly-yellow samovár

stood hissing on the table; a pot of geranium reared itself in front of the small window; in one corner, near the door, stood sideways a hideous trunk, with a tiny padlock; on the trunk lay a porous heap of various old odds and ends; on the walls dirty little pictures made black spots. Onísim and Vasilísa were drinking tea in silence, as they gazed into each other's face, turned their lumps of sugar long in their hands, as though reluctant to nibble them,[1] half-closed their eyes, blinked, and drew the yellowish boiling water through their teeth with a whistling noise. At last they drank the samovár dry, turned upside down[2] their round teacups with inscriptions,—on one: "To Gratification," and on the other: "It innocently Pierced,"—grunted with satisfaction, mopped away the perspiration, and began gradually to enter into conversation.

"What 's your master like, Onísim Sergyéitch?" . . . inquired Vasilísa, and did not finish her sentence.

"What 's my master like?" . . . returned Onísim and propped his head on his hand. "'T is

[1] Poor Russians, especially of the peasant and petty burgher class, nibble their sugar, and so economically sweeten their mouths instead of the beverage. But Russians of all classes are fond of this method, without regard to economy.—Translator.

[2] To indicate that they had finished. Russian lower-class etiquette, enjoins that the cup be thus reversed as a sign that the invitation to "have another cup" is definitively declined, and that further polite urging (also a point of etiquette), is useless.—Translator.

well known what he is like. But what do you want to know for?"

"I just asked, sir, at random," replied Vasilísa.

"Why, you know, he . . ." (here Onísim grinned):—"you know, he wrote a letter to you, I believe."

"He did, sir."

Onísim wagged his head with an uncommonly self-satisfied air.

"There now, there now,"—he said hoarsely, and not without a smile.—"Well, and what did he write to you?"

"Why, various things. 'I, Madam Vasilísa Timofyéevna,' says he, 'am thus and so; did n't mean anything; you are not to think; you are not to feel offended, madam'; and lots more of the same sort he wrote. . . . Well,"—she added, after a brief pause—"and what sort of a man is he?"

"He exists,"—replied Onísim, indifferently.

"Has he a bad temper?"

"The idea! No, he has n't. Well, and do you like him?"

Vasilísa dropped her eyes and laughed in her sleeve.

"Come,"—growled Onísim.

"But what do you want to know for, Onísim Sergyéitch?"

"Come, now, speak, I tell you."

"What 's your master like?"—repeated Vasi-

lísa, at last. "Of course . . . . I . . . well, and he 's so . . . . you know how it is yourself. . . ."

"How can I help knowing?"—remarked Onísim, pompously.

"For of course you are aware, Onísim Sergyéitch . . . ."

Vasilísa was obviously becoming agitated.

"Do you say to him, to your master that is: 'I am not angry with him,' says she, 'and here,' says she . . . ."

She began to stammer. . .

"We understand, ma'am,"—returned Onísim, and slowly rose from his chair.—"We understand, ma'am. Thanks for your hospitality."

"I hope you will favour me again with your company."

"Well, all right, all right."

Onísim walked to the door. The fat woman made her appearance in the room.

"How do you do, Onísim Sergyéitch?"—she said in a sing-song tone.

"How do you do, Praskóvya Ivánovna?"—he replied, also in a sing-song tone.

Both stood still awhile facing each other.

"Well, good-bye, Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—said Onísim with his drawl.

"Well, good-bye, Onísim Sergyéitch,"—she replied, also drawling.

Onísim returned home. His master was lying on his bed, and staring at the ceiling.

"Where hast thou been?"

"Where have I been?" . . . (Onísim had a habit of reproachfully repeating the last words of every question.)—"I have been about your business."

"What business?"

"And don't you know? . . . I have been to Vasilísa's."

Pyetushkóff winked his eyes, and wriggled on the bed.

"That 's exactly how it is,"—remarked Onísim, and coolly took a pinch of snuff:—"that 's exactly how it is, always like that. Vasilísa sends her compliments to you."

"You don't say so?"

"You don't say so? That 's exactly how it is. You don't say so! . . . . She bade me say, 'Why don't I see him?' says she. 'Why does n't he come?' says she."

"Well, and what didst thou say?"

"What did I say? I said to her: 'Thou art silly,'—I said to her;—'will such folks come to see thee? No, do thou come thyself,'—I said to her."

"Well, and what did she say?"

"What did she say? . . . . She . . . . nothing."

"But what dost thou mean by nothing?"

"Everybody knows what nothing means."

Pyetushkóff maintained silence for a space.

"Well, and will she come?"

Onísim wagged his head.

"Come! . . . . You 're in an awful hurry, sir. Come! . . . . No, but just you . . . ."

"Why, but thou saidst thyself that . . . . you know . . . ."

"Much I did!"

Again Pyetushkóff remained silent awhile.

"Well, but what is the state of affairs, my good fellow?"

"What is the state of affairs? . . . . You ought to know best: you 're the master."

"Well, no, what is there . . . ."

Onísim rocked himself to and fro in self-satisfied fashion.

"Do you know Praskóvya Ivánovna?"—he asked at last.

"No. What Praskóvya Ivánovna?"

"The bake-shop woman?"

"Ah, yes, the bake-shop woman. I have seen her: a very fat woman."

"A woman of importance. She 's your own aunt by blood, you know."

"My aunt?"

"Why, did n't you know that?"

"No, I did not."

"Ekh! . . . ."

Out of respect to his master, Onísim did not utter the whole of his thought.

"There 's a person with whom you should get acquainted."

"All right. I have no objection."

Onísim gazed approvingly at Iván Afanásievitch.

"But why, in particular, ought I to make her acquaintance?"—inquired Pyetushkóff.

"Just see there, now!"—returned Onísim, coolly.

Iván Afanásievitch rose, paced the room, halted in front of the window, and, without turning his head, enunciated with some confusion:

"Onísim!"

"What, sir?"

"And won't I feel rather awkward, thou knowest, with a woman, hey?"

"You know best."

"However, I only asked the question at random. My comrades may notice; it 's always rather . . . . However, I will think the matter over. Give me my pipe. . . And so she,"—he added after a brief pause:—"Vasilísa, I mean, says . . . ."

But Onísim did not wish to prolong the conversation and assumed his habitual glum aspect.

IV

Iván Afanásievitch's acquaintance with Praskóvya Ivánovna began in the following manner. Five days after the conversation with Onísim, Pyetushkóff set out one evening for the baker's shop.—"Come," he said to himself, as he opened

the creaking wicket-gate,—"I don't know what will happen. . . ."

He mounted the porch, and opened the door. A very large, crested hen darted straight under his feet, with a deafening shriek, and for a long time thereafter continued to scurry agitatedly about the yard. The surprised face of the fat woman gazed from the window of the adjoining room. Iván Afanásievitch smiled and nodded his head. The woman saluted him. Clutching his hat tightly, Iván Afanásievitch approached her. Praskóvya Ivánovna was, evidently, expecting an honoured guest; all the hooks of her gown were fastened. Pyetushkóff seated himself on a chair; Praskóvya Ivánovna seated herself opposite him.

"I have come to you, Praskóvya Ivánovna, chiefly with regard to . . . ." said Iván Afanásievitch at last—and fell silent. His lips twitched convulsively.

"I am glad to see you, dear little father,"—replied Praskóvya Ivánovna in a sing-song tone, and bowing. "I am glad to see any visitor."

Pyetushkóff summoned up a little courage.

"I have long wished, you know, to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"Much obliged, Iván Afanásievitch."

A pause ensued. Praskóvya Ivánovna mopped her face with a gay-coloured hand-

kerchief; Iván Afanásievitch stared somewhere to one side with great attention. Both were decidedly embarrassed. However, in merchant and petty burgher circles, where even old friends do not meet without queer angular grimaces, a certain constraint in the manners of guest and host not only does not strike any one as strange, but, on the contrary, is regarded as perfectly fitting and indispensable, especially at a first interview. Praskóvya Ivánovna was pleased with Pyetushkóff. He bore himself decorously and properly, and nevertheless he was a man with official rank!

"I am very fond of your rolls, dear little mother, Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—he said to her.

"Jist so, sir, jist so, sir."

"They are very good, you know, very."

"Eat, dear little father, and may health be yours, eat. It gives me great pleasure."

"Even in Moscow I never ate such good ones."

"Jist so, sir, jist so, sir."

Again silence descended.

"But tell me, Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—began Iván Afanásievitch:—"I believe you have a niece living with you?"

"My own niece, dear little father."

"Well, . . . how comes she to be with you?"

"She is an orphan, and I support her, sir."

"And she is a good worker?"

"She is, dear little father, she is. Such a good

worker that ih . . . . ih . . . . ih! . . . Certainly, sir, certainly, sir!"

Iván Afanásievitch considered it decorous not to enlarge further on the subject of the niece.

"What sort of a bird have you in that cage, Praskóvya Ivánovna?"

"Why, God only knows. 'T is a bird."

"Hm! Well, good-bye, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"Good-bye, your Well-Born. I hope you will favour us again. Come and drink tea."

"It will give me particular pleasure, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

Pyetushkóff withdrew. On the porch he encountered Vasilísa. She burst out laughing.

"Whither are you going, my dear little dove?" —said Iván Afanásievitch, not without audacity.

"Come, stop that, stop that, you jester; what a tease you are!"

"He, he! And did you get my note?"

Vasilísa hid the lower part of her face in her sleeve and made no reply.

"And you are not angry with me?"

"Vasilísa!"—quavered her aunt's voice:— "hey, there, Vasilísa!"

Vasilísa ran into the house. Pyetushkóff went his way. But from that day forth he began to visit the baker's shop frequently, and not in vain. Iván Afanásievitch, to speak in lofty style, attained his end. The attainment of an end usu-

ally cools men off, but Pyetushkóff, on the contrary, grew more and more ardent with every passing day. Love is a fortuitous affair; it exists of itself, as an art, and needs no justification, like nature, some wise man has said, who himself had never been in love, but reasoned admirably about love. Pyetushkóff became passionately attached to Vasilísa. He was perfectly happy. His soul warmed up. Little by little he transferred all his belongings, at least all his Turkish pipes, to Praskóvya Ivánovna's house, and sat for whole days together in her back room. Praskóvya charged him for his dinner, and drank his tea; consequently, she did not complain of his presence. Vasilísa got used to him, worked, sang, and spun in his presence, and sometimes exchanged a couple of words with him; Pyetushkóff gazed at her, smoked his pipe, rocked himself on his chair, laughed, and, during her leisure hours, played *duratchkí* [fool] with her and Praskóvya Ivánovna. Iván Afanásievitch was happy. . . . . But there is nothing perfect on earth, and however small a man's demands may be, Fate never fully satisfies them, even spoils things, if possible. . . . The spoonful of tar will persist in falling into the barrel of honey![1] Iván Afanásievitch made experience of this in his own case. In the first place, ever since his

[1] The Russian expression to indicate that one drop of bitterness will ruin the sweetest of fates.—TRANSLATOR.

removal to Vasilísa's, Pyetushkóff had fallen still more out of touch with his comrades. He saw them only on indispensable occasions, and then, with a view to avoiding hints and jeers (in which, by the way, he was not always successful), he assumed the desperately-morose and concentratedly-alarmed mien of a hare which is drumming in the midst of fireworks. In the second place, Onísim gave him no peace, lost all reverence for him, obdurately persecuted him, and put him to shame. In the third place, and in conclusion . . . . Alas! read further, indulgent reader.

V

One day Pyetushkóff (who, for the above-mentioned reasons, fared badly outside of Praskóvya Ivánovna's house) was sitting in the rear room—Vasilísa's room—and busying himself with some sort of domestic preparation, not precisely a preserve, nor yet precisely a liqueur. The mistress of the house was not at home. Vasilísa was sitting in the bake-shop and humming a song.

A tap came on the pane. Vasilísa rose, stepped to the window, uttered a faint shriek, burst out laughing, and began a whispered conversation with some person or other. On returning to her seat, she sighed, and began to sing louder than before.

"With whom wert thou chatting just now?" —Pyetushkóff asked her.

Vasilísa continued to "break the viburnum-bush." [1]

"Vasilísa! Dost hear? Hey, Vasilísa?"

"What do you want?"

"With whom wert thou talking?"

"And why do you want to know?"

"Because I do."

Pyetushkóff emerged from the back room in a motley-hued Caucasian coat, with sleeves rolled up and with a siphon in his hand.

"Why, with a good friend,"—replied Vasilísa.

"With what good friend?"

"Why, with Piótr Petróvitch."

"With Piótr Petróvitch? . . . . With what Piótr Petróvitch?"

"He 's a comrade of yours also. He has such a queer name."

"Bublítzyn?" [2]

[1] The viburnum, or wild snowball-tree, figures in many of the folk-songs. "Breaking the viburnum-bush" is one of the traditional rites connected with the peasant wedding. On the young couple's table there is a ham and a square bottle of liquor corked with a bunch of viburnum tied with a scarlet ribbon. The bridal pair are aroused, and treating begins: they make the round of the homes of the bride's relatives, parents and the members of her bridal-train (consisting of certain definitely-prescribed persons for bridegroom and bride), and the wedding-guests. On their return, the best man (the eleventh in the groom's train) cuts the ham, and pulling apart the cluster of viburnum, passes around the liquor. Every step of the traditional wedding-ceremonial is accompanied by songs. Vasilísa was singing the one appointed for the final stage, as above described.—Translator.

[2] Derived from *búblik*—a large roll in the form of a ring.—Translator.

"Well, yes, yes. . . . Piótr Petróvitch."

"And dost thou know him?"

"I should think I did!"—returned Vasilísa, nodding her head.

Pyetushkóff paced up and down the room half a score of times, in silence.

"Hearken to me, Vasilísa,"—he said at last:—"in what way dost thou know him?"

"In what way do I know him? . . . . Why, I do know him. . . . He 's such a nice gentleman."

"But how is he nice? How is he nice? How is he nice?"

Vasilísa looked at Iván Afanásievitch.

"He is,"—she said slowly and with surprise.—"Everybody knows what he is."

Pyetushkóff bit his lips and began to pace the room again.

"What wert thou talking about with him? Hey?"

Vasilísa smiled and dropped her eyes.

"Come, speak, speak, speak, I tell thee, speak!"

"What a temper you are in to-day,"—remarked Vasilísa.

Pyetushkóff made no answer.

"Well, no, Vasilísa,"—he began at last:—"no, I will not be angry. . . . Come now, tell me, what were you talking about?"

Vasilísa laughed.

"That Piótr Petróvitch is such a joker, really!"

"How so?"

"Well, he is!"

Again Pyetushkóff made no reply.

"Vasilísa, thou lovest me, I think?"—he asked her.

"Come, take yourself off!"

Poor Pyetushkóff's head grew oppressed. Praskóvya Ivánovna entered. They sat down to dine. After dinner, Praskóvya Ivánovna took herself off to the platform over the oven.[1] Iván Afanásievitch himself lay down by the oven, nestled about for a while, and fell asleep. A cautious creaking noise awoke him. Iván Afanásievitch half raised himself, propped himself on his elbow, and looked: the door was open. He sprang up—Vasilísa was gone. He ran into the yard—and she was not in the yard; into the street—and gazed hither and thither: Vasilísa was not to be seen. Hatless, he ran clear to the market: no Vasilísa was visible. Slowly he returned to the baker's shop, climbed up on the oven, and turned his face to the wall. He was heavy at heart. Bublítzyn . . . . Bublítzyn . . . . that name fairly rang in his ears.

"What 's the matter with thee, dear little father?"—Praskóvya Ivánovna asked him with a sleepy voice.—"Why art thou groaning?"

"Nothing, dear little mother; 't was just by accident. Nothing. I feel choked, somehow."

[1] For sleeping.—Translator.

"'T is the mushrooms,"—lisped Praskóvya Ivánovna,—"'t is all the mushrooms."

O Lord, have mercy upon us sinners!

One hour passed, then another—and still Vasilísa was absent. A score of times did Pyetushkóff feel impelled to rise, and a score of times did he sadly nestle down under the sheepskin coat. . . . At last, however, he climbed down from the oven and started to go home, and had already got out into the yard, but turned back. Praskóvya Ivánovna had risen. Luká, the workman, as black as a beetle, although he was a baker, was putting the loaves in the oven. Again Pyetushkóff went out on the porch and pondered. A goat who dwelt in the courtyard made up to him, and butted him slightly with his horns, in friendly wise. Pyetushkóff glanced at him, and, God knows why, said: "Kys, kys!" [1] All of a sudden, the low-browed wicket-gate opened softly, and Vasilísa made her appearance. Iván Afanásievitch went straight to meet her, took her by the hand, and said to her with considerable coolness, but quite firmly:

"Follow me."

"But excuse me, Iván Afanásievitch . . . . I . . . ."

"Follow me,"—he repeated.

She obeyed.

Pyetushkóff led her to his own lodgings.

[1] Equivalent to: "Puss, puss!"—Translator.

Onísim, according to his habit, was sleeping, stretched out at full length. Iván Afanásievitch woke him, and ordered him to light a candle. Vasilísa walked to the window and seated herself in silence. While Onísim was fussing with the light in the anteroom, Pyetushkóff stood motionless at the other window, staring into the street. Onísim entered, with the candle in his hand, and started to grumble. . . . Iván Afanásievitch wheeled swiftly round.

"Leave the room,"—he said to him.

Onísim stopped short in the middle of the room. . . .

"Leave the room this very instant!"—repeated Pyetushkóff, sternly.

Onísim cast a glance at his master, and left the room.

Iván Afanásievitch shouted after him:

"Begone, go away altogether! Leave the house. Thou mayest return two hours hence."

Onísim took himself off.

Pyetushkóff waited until the gate slammed, and immediately approached Vasilísa.

"Where hast thou been?"

Vasilísa was disconcerted.

"Where hast thou been? I ask thee,"—he repeated.

Vasilísa cast a glance around her. . . .

"I am speaking to thee. . . . Where hast thou been?"

Pyetushkóff began to raise his hand. . . .

"Don't beat me, Iván Afanásievitch, don't beat me . . . ." whispered Vasilísa in affright.

Pyetushkóff turned away.

"Beat thee. . . . No! I will not beat thee. Beat thee? Forgive me, forgive me, my darling. God bless thee! When I thought that thou didst love me, when I . . . . when . . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch stopped. He was choking.

"Listen, Vasilísa,"—he said at last: "I am a good-natured man, as thou knowest; thou dost know that, Vasilísa, dost thou not?"

"I do,"—she stammered out.

"I do harm to no one, to no one, to no one in the world. And I deceive no one. Then why dost thou deceive me?"

"But I do not deceive thee, Iván Afanásievitch."

"Thou dost not deceive me? Well, good. Well, good. Come, tell me, where hast thou been?"

"I went to Matryóna."

"Thou liest!"

"God is my witness, I went to see Matryóna. Ask her if you do not believe me."

"And Bub . . . . come, what 's his name? . . . . didst thou see that devil?"

"I did."

"Thou sawest him? Thou sawest him?—Ah! thou sawest him?"

Pyetushkóff turned pale.

"So thou didst make an appointment with him this morning, at the window . . . . hey? hey?"

"He asked me to come."

"And thou didst go. . . . Thanks, dear little mother, thanks, my own!"—Pyetushkóff made a bow to Vasilísa's girdle.

"Yes, Iván Afanásievitch, perhaps you think . . . ."

"Thou wouldst do well not to talk! And I, the fool, have made a pretty mess of it too! What am I shouting about? As for thee, pray consort with whomsoever thou wilt. I care nothing for thee. So there now! I 'll have nothing to do with thee."

Vasilísa rose to her feet.

"As you like, Iván Afanásievitch."

"Whither art thou going?"

"Why, you yourself, you know . . . ."

"I 'm not driving thee away,"—Pyetushkóff interrupted her.

"No, really now, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . Why should I remain at your house? . . ."

Pyetushkóff let her get as far as the door.

"So thou art going away, Vasilísa?"

"You keep insulting me. . . ."

"I insult thee! Thou dost not fear God, Vasilísa! When did I ever insult thee? Come, no, no, tell me, when?"

"But what do you mean? A little while ago you came near thrashing me."

"Vasilísa, 't is sinful of thee. Really, 't is sinful!"

"And you have reproached me, to boot, and said: 'I won't have anything to do with thee. I 'm a gentleman,' you said."

Iván Afanásievitch began silently to wring his hands. Vasilísa got to the middle of the room.

"Well, what then? God be with you, Iván Afanásievitch. I will go my way, and you can go yours. . . ."

"Enough, Vasilísa, enough of that,"—Pyetushkóff interrupted her.—"Thou hadst better change thy mind; look at me. Surely, I am not like myself. I don't know myself, what I am saying. . . . Thou mightest have pity on me. ."

"You are always insulting me, Iván Afanásievitch. . . ."

"Ekh, Vasilísa! When sorrow is asleep, wake it not. Is n't that so? Thou art not angry with me, art thou?"

"You are always insulting me,"—repeated Vasilísa.

"I won't do it again, I won't do it again. Forgive me, an old man. I 'll never do so again. Come, hast thou forgiven me, I 'd like to know?"

"God be with thee, Iván Afanásievitch."

"Come, laugh, laugh. . . ."

Vasilísa turned away.

"She laughed, the dear soul, she laughed!" —cried Pyetushkóff, dancing up and down where he stood, like a child. . . .

VI

On the following day, Pyetushkóff, according to his wont, set off for the baker's shop. Everything went on as of yore. But a thorn had been implanted in his heart. He no longer laughed as frequently, and he was sometimes pensive. Sunday arrived. Praskóvya Ivánovna had a pain in her loins; she stuck to the platform over the oven; with a great effort, she got down to go to the morning service. After the service, Pyetushkóff called Vasilísa into the rear room. She had been complaining all the morning of being bored. Judging by the expression of Iván Afanásievitch's face, an unusual thought, and one which was unexpected to himself, was running about in his mind.

"Come, sit thee down here, Vasilísa,"—he said to her,—"and I will sit there. I must have a little talk with thee."

Vasilísa seated herself.

"Tell me, Vasilísa, dost thou know how to write?"

"To write?"

"Yes, to write."

"No, I don't know how."

"And to read?"

"And I don't know how to read either."

"But who read my letter to thee?"

"The chanter."

Pyetushkóff was silent for a while.

"But wouldst thou like to know how to read and write?"

"But why should the likes of me want to know how to read and write, Iván Afanásievitch?"

"What dost thou mean by 'why'? So that thou canst read books."

"And what is there in books?"

"Everything good. . . . Listen, I will bring thee a little book,—shall I?"

"But, you see, I don't know how to read, Iván Afanásievitch."

"I will read to thee."

"Why, that must be tiresome, I think?"

"How can it?! tiresome! On the contrary, it is a good remedy for tedium."

"Will you read fairy-tales?"

"Thou shalt see—to-morrow."

Pyetushkóff returned home toward evening and began to rummage in his drawers. He found several odd volumes of the "Library for Reading," five coarse Moscow romances, Nazároff's arithmetic, a child's geography with a picture of the globe on the title-page, the second part of Kaidánoff's history, two dream-books, a calendar for the year 1819, two numbers of "Galatea,"

Natálya Dolgorúky, by Kozlóff, and the first part of *Roslávleff*. For a long time he meditated which he should select, and finally decided to take Kozlóff's poem, and *Roslávleff*.

On the following day, Pyetushkóff dressed himself in haste, thrust both of the wretched little books under the facing of his coat, went to the baker's shop, and began to read her Zagóskin's romance. Vasilísa sat motionless, first smiled, then seemed to fall into thought . . . . then bent forward a little; her eyes narrowed, her lips parted slightly, her hands fell on her knees—she dozed. Pyetushkóff went on reading fast, unintelligibly, and in a low voice,—raised his eyes. . . .

"Vasilísa, art thou asleep?"

She gave a start, rubbed her face and stretched herself. Pyetushkóff was vexed with her and with himself. . . .

"It 's tiresome,"—said Vasilísa, lazily.

"Listen, and I 'll read thee some verses, shall I?"

"What?"

"Verses . . . . fine verses."

"No, stop; really, now, do."

Pyetushkóff briskly pulled out Kozlóff's poem, sprang to his feet, strode through the room, dashed headlong at Vasilísa, and began to read. Vasilísa threw back her head, flung wide her hands, cast a glance into Pyetushkóff's face—and

suddenly broke out into a ringing peal of merry laughter; . . . . she fairly rolled with laughter.

Iván Afanásievitch hurled the book to the floor with vexation. Vasilísa continued to laugh.

"Well, what art thou laughing at, stupid?"

Vasilísa redoubled her peals of laughter.

"Laugh on, laugh on,"—growled Pyetushkóff through his teeth.

Vasilísa clutched at her side, and groaned.

"But what art thou groaning at, thou crazy woman?"

But Vasilísa merely flourished her hands. Iván Afanásievitch seized his cap and fled from the house. With uneven steps he strode swiftly through the town, and kept on walking until he found himself at the barrier. Along the street there came suddenly the rumbling of wheels, the trampling of horses. . . . Some one called him by name. He raised his head, and beheld a commodious old-fashioned linéika.[1] In the jaunting-car, facing him, sat Mr. Bublítzyn between two young ladies, the daughters of Mr. Tiutiuryóff. The two girls were dressed exactly alike, as though to signalise their inseparable friendship; both were smiling pensively, but agreeably, and lolling their heads languidly on one side. On the other side of the jaunting-car the broad,

[1] The *linéika* is something like an Irish jaunting-car, sometimes with a cross-seat added at the rear, to match the coachman's seat in front. It has no springs.—TRANSLATOR.

straw hat of the worthy Mr. Tiutiuryóff was visible, and a portion of his fat, round nape presented itself to the gaze; alongside his straw hat the mob-cap of his spouse reared itself aloft. The very position of the two parents served as a plain indication of their sincere goodwill and confidence in young Bublítzyn. And young Bublítzyn, evidently, was conscious of and prized their flattering confidence. Of course, he was sitting in an unconstrained attitude, was chatting and laughing unconstrainedly; but in the very lack of constraint of his behaviour a tender, touching respect was perceptible. And the Misses Tiutiuryóff? It would be difficult to express in words all that the attentive eye of an observer discerned in the features of the two sisters. Good principles and gentleness, and modest mirth, sorrowful comprehension of life and immovable faith in themselves, in the lofty and very beautiful vocation of man on earth, decorous attention to their youthful interlocutor, who was not, perhaps, quite their equal in the matter of intellectual endowment, but entirely worthy of indulgence on the score of his attributes of heart . . . . these were the qualities and sentiments which were depicted at that moment on the countenances of the Misses Tiutiuryóff. Bublítzyn called to Iván Afanásievitch by name on the impulse of the moment, without any reason whatsoever, out of overflowing inward satisfaction; he bowed to him in an extremely friendly

and courteous manner; the Misses Tiutiuryóff themselves looked caressingly and gently at him, as at a man with whom they were not averse to making acquaintance. . . . The kind, well-fed, peaceable horses passed Iván Afanásievitch at a gentle trot; the jaunting-car rolled smoothly along the broad road, bearing the good-natured maidenly laughter; there was a last fleeting glimpse of Mr. Tiutiuryóff's hat; the trace-horses turned their heads to the side, and bounded dashingly along over the short, green grass . . . the coachman began to whistle encouragingly and cautiously; the jaunting-car disappeared behind the willows.

Poor Pyetushkóff stood for a long time rooted to the spot.

"I 'm an orphan, a Kazán orphan," [1] he whispered at last. . . .

A tattered little brat of a boy halted in front of him, gazed timidly at him, and held out his hand. . . .

"For Christ's sake, good gentleman."

Pyetushkóff got a two-kopék piece out of his pocket.

"There, take that for thine orphanhood,"—he said with an effort, and returned to the baker's shop.—On the threshold of Vasilísa's room Iván Afanásievitch halted.

"And this,"—he thought, "this is the kind of

[1] Probably in reference to the absolute desolation created at the capture of Kazán from the Tatárs by Iván the Terrible.—Translator.

person with whom I consort! Here it is, my family! here it is! . . . And there 's Bublítzyn, and then there 's Bublítzyn."

Vasilísa, seated with her back to him and carelessly humming a tune, was winding thread. She was wearing a faded calico gown; she had braided her hair at hap-hazard. . . . It was intolerably hot in the room, and there was an odour of feather-bed and old rags; here and there on the walls, reddish, dandified cockroaches [1] were scuttling briskly about; on the decrepit chest of drawers, with holes in place of locks, lay a woman's patched shoe, by the side of a broken jar. . . . Kozlóff's poem was still lying on the floor. . . . Pyetushkóff shook his head, folded his arms, and left the room. He was hurt.

At home he gave orders that his clothes should be brought, that he might dress. Onísim dragged himself slowly off in quest of a coat. Pyetushkóff longed to challenge Onísim to a chat, but Onísim maintained a surly silence. At last Iván Afanásievitch could contain himself no longer.

"Why dost not thou ask me where I am going?"

"Why should I care to know where you are going?"

"What dost thou mean by that? See here now, some one may come on urgent business, and ask: 'Is Iván Afanásievitch at home?' And then

[1] Literally: Prussians.—Translator.

thou couldst tell him: 'Iván Afanásievitch has gone to such and such a place.'"

"On urgent business. . . . But who does come to you on urgent business?"

"Here now, art thou beginning to be impudent again? Art thou at it again?"

Onísim turned away, and began to brush the coat.

"Really, Onísim, thou art a disagreeable man."

Onísim darted an oblique glance at his master.

"And thou art always like that. Precisely that,—always."

Onísim grinned.

"But what 's the use of my asking you whither you are going, Iván Afanásievitch? As if I did n't know! To the baker's girl!"

"What nonsense! That 's a lie! I 'm not going to her at all. I don't intend to go to the baker's girl any more."

Onísim screwed up his eyes, and shook his brush. Pyetushkóff had expected approbation; but his servant preserved silence.

"It is n't fitting,"—went on Iván Afanásievitch in a severe tone,—"it is indecent. . . . Come, now, say what thou thinkest."

"What 's the use of my thinking? Do as you please. Why should I think?"

Pyetushkóff donned his coat.—"He does n't believe me, the brute,"—he thought to himself.

He left the house, but did not drop in to call on

any one. He roamed about the streets. He directed his attention to the setting sun. At last, about eight o'clock, he returned home. He was smiling; he kept incessantly shrugging his shoulders, as though in wonder at his own stupidity. —"There, now,"—he thought;—"that 's what it means to have a strong will. . . ."

On the following day Pyetushkóff rose quite late. He had not passed a very good night, he went nowhere until the evening, and was frightfully bored. Pyetushkóff read through all his horrid little books, and praised aloud one of the romances in the "Library for Reading." When he went to bed, he ordered Onísim to give him a pipe. Onísim handed him a very wretched little Turkish pipe. Pyetushkóff began to smoke; the pipe bubbled hoarsely, like a broken-winded horse.

"How nasty!"—exclaimed Iván Afanásievitch;—"and where 's my cherry-wood pipe?"

"Why, at the baker's shop,"—calmly replied Onísim.

Pyetushkóff winked convulsively.

"Well? Do you command me to go for it?"

"No, it is n't necessary; don't go. . . I don't want it; don't go, dost thou hear?"

"I obey, sir."

He got through the night somehow. In the morning, Onísim, according to custom, presented to Pyetushkóff, on a plate with blue flowers, a

fresh, white roll. Iván Afanásievitch looked out of the window, and asked Onísim:

"Didst thou go to the bake-shop?"

"Who should go, if not I?"

"Ah!"

Pyetushkóff sank into meditation.

"Tell me, please, didst thou see any one there?"

"Of course I did."

"Whom didst thou see there, for example?"

"Vasilísa, of course."

Iván Afanásievitch fell silent. Onísim cleared the table, and was on the point of leaving the room. . . .

"Onísim!"—called Pyetushkóff, faintly.

"What do you wish?"

"A . . . did she inquire about me?"

"Of course she did n't."

Pyetushkóff gritted his teeth.—"There,"—he thought,—"there 's love for you. . . ." He hung his head.—"And I certainly have been ridiculous,"—he pursued his meditations;—"I took a fancy to read poetry to her! Eká! Why, she 's a fool! Why, the only thing fit for her, fool that she is, is to lie on the oven, and eat pancakes! Why, she 's a blockhead, a perfect blockhead; an uneducated creature of the petty burgher class!"

"She has n't come . . . ." he whispered two hours later, as he sat in the same place;—"she

has not come! What do you think of that? She certainly could see that I left her in anger; she certainly might have known that I was offended! There 's love for thee! And she did n't even inquire whether I was well! 'Is Iván Afanásievitch well?'—quoth she. This is the second day that she has n't seen me,—and she does n't mind! . . . . Perhaps she has even been pleased to have another meeting with that Bub . . . . The lucky dog! Phew, damn it, what a fool I am!"

Pyetushkóff rose, paced the room in silence, halted, frowned slightly, and scratched the back of his head.—"Never mind,"—he said aloud:—"I 'll just go to her. I must see what she is doing yonder. I must make her feel ashamed. Positively. . . . I will go. Ónka! Dress me!"

"Come now,"—he thought, as he was dressing;—"let 's see what will happen. Just as likely as not, she will be angry with me. And, in fact, here a man has been going-going, going-going to see her, and all of a sudden, without rhyme or reason, he has stopped going! So now, we shall see!"

Iván Afanásievitch left the house, and trudged off to the bake-shop. He paused at the wicket-gate: he must spruce himself up, and tighten his belt. . . . Pyetushkóff grasped his coat-tails with both hands, and came near tearing them off altogether. . . . Convulsively did he crane his

outstretched neck, fastened the top hook of his collar, and heaved a sigh. . . .

"Why are you standing there?"—Praskóvya Ivánovna cried to him through the window.—"Come in."

Pyetushkóff started and went in. Praskóvya Ivánovna met him on the threshold.

"Why did n't you favour us with your company yesterday, dear little father? Did some trifling indisposition prevent you?"

"Yes, somehow I had a headache yesterday. . . ."

"You ought to have put a cucumber on each temple, dear little father. It would have disappeared instantly. And does your dear head ache now?"

"No, it does not ache."

"Well, thanks be to thee, O Lord!"

Iván Afanásievitch betook himself to the back room. Vasilísa caught sight of him.

"Ah! Good morning, Iván Afanásitch!"

"Good morning, Vasilísa Timofyéevna."

"What did you do with the siphon, Iván Afanásitch?"

"The siphon? What siphon?"

"The siphon . . . . our siphon. You must have carried it off to your house. You 're such a . . . . Lord forgive! . . ."

Pyetushkóff assumed a cold and dignified aspect.

"I will order my man to look. As I was not here yesterday,"—he said significantly. . . .

"Akh, why that 's a fact, you were n't here yesterday."—Vasilísa squatted down on her heels and began to rummage in a chest. . . . "Aunty! Hey, aunty!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Didst thou take my kerchief, I 'd like to know?"

"What kerchief?"

"Why, the yellow one."

"The yellow one?"

"Yes, the yellow one with the flowered pattern."

"No, I did n't take it."

Pyetushkóff bent over Vasilísa.

"Listen to me, Vasilísa; hearken to what I am going to say to thee. 'T is not a question now of siphons or of kerchiefs; thou canst busy thyself over that nonsense at some other time."

Vasilísa did not stir from the spot, and merely raised her head.

"Do thou tell me, conscientiously—dost thou love me or not? That 's what I want to know, in short!"

"Akh, what a man you are, Iván Afanásievitch! . . . . Well, yes, of course."

"But if thou lovest me, then why didst not thou come to me yesterday? Didst thou not have the time? Well, then thou mightest have sent to

inquire whether I was ill, whether I was dead. But thou didst worry thyself little. I might even die yonder, all by myself, and thou wouldst not come!"

"Ekh, Iván Afanásievitch, a body can't think of one thing all the time; there 's work to be done."

"Of course,"—responded Pyetushkóff,—"and, nevertheless . . . . And it is n't proper to laugh at your elders. . . . It is n't nice. However, there 's no harm, in certain cases. . . . But where 's my pipe?"

"Here is your pipe."

Pyetushkóff began to smoke.

VII

Several days passed quite peacefully to all appearance. But a thunder-storm was brewing. Pyetushkóff tormented himself, was jealous, never took his eyes from Vasilísa, watched her anxiously, and grew frightfully tired of her. Finally, one evening, Vasilísa dressed herself more carefully than usual, and seizing a convenient opportunity, she went off somewhere to make a visit. Night descended, and she had not returned. Pyetushkóff returned to his lodgings at dawn, and at eight o'clock in the morning ran to the bake-shop. . . . Vasilísa had not arrived. With an inexpressible sinking at the heart he

waited for her until dinner-time . . . . and they sat down to the table without her. . . .

"Where can she have disappeared to?"—said Praskóvya Ivánovna, indifferently.

"You spoil her; you simply spoil her completely!"—Pyetushkóff kept repeating.

"Ih, dear little father! one can't keep track of a young girl!"—replied Praskóvya Ivánovna.—"God be with her! If only she had done her work. . . . . Why should n't a person have a little fun? . . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch was seized with a cold chill. At last, toward evening, Vasilísa made her appearance. That was all he was waiting for. Pyetushkóff rose solemnly from his chair, folded his arms, and contracted his brows in a stern frown. . . . But Vasilísa looked him boldly in the eye, laughed audaciously, and, without giving him a chance to utter a word, walked briskly into her room and locked the door. Iván Afanásievitch opened his mouth and stared in amazement at Praskóvya Ivánovna. . . . Praskóvya Ivánovna dropped her eyes. Iván Afanásievitch stood there for a while, groped for his cap, put it on his head askew, and left the house without shutting his mouth.

He reached home, took a leather cushion and flung himself with it on the divan, face to the wall. Onísim peeped in from the anteroom, entered the chamber, leaned his back against the

door, took a pinch of snuff, and crossed his legs.

"Are you ill, Iván Afanásievitch?"—he asked Pyetushkóff.

Pyetushkóff made no reply.

"Do you order me to go for the doctor?"—went on Onísim, after waiting a little.

"I 'm well. . . . Get out!"—said Iván Afanásievitch in a dull tone.

"Well? . . . . No, you are n't well, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . What sort of health is this?"

Pyetushkóff maintained silence.

"You 'd better take a look at yourself. Why, you 've grown so thin that you simply have become unrecognisable. And all for what? When one comes to think of it, he loses mind and reason, by God! And a nobleman, to boot!"

Onísim paused. . . . Pyetushkóff did not stir.

"Is this the way noblemen behave?—Come, you might have had your fling . . . . why not? . . . . you might have had your fling, and dismissed it with a box on the ear. But what 's this like? Why, actually, one may say, 't is falling in love with Satan more than with the bright falcon."

Iván Afanásievitch only writhed.

"Come, really, this won't do, Iván Afanásievitch. If any other person had said to me concerning you, 'Here now, here now, what goings-on!' I would have said to him: 'Thou 'rt a fool.

Begone! For whom dost thou take me? Dost suppose I 'm going to believe that?' But now I see for myself, and I don't believe. Why, there can't be anything worse than this. Has she been giving you some sort of philter, pray? What is there about her, anyway? If you would use common sense, 't is all utter nonsense—simply fit to spit upon. And she does n't even know how to speak correctly. . . . She 's just simply a common wench! Even worse than that!"

"Get out!"—moaned Iván Afanásievitch into his pillow.

"No—I won't get out, Iván Afanásievitch. Who should speak, if not I? Just look at the facts. Here you are breaking your heart . . . . and for what? Come, for what? good gracious, tell me!"

"Do go away, Onísim,"—groaned Pyetushkóff again.

Onísim held his tongue awhile, out of decorum.

"And just to think,"—he began again:—"she feels no gratitude whatever. Any other woman would n't have known how to do enough to please you; but she! . . . . She does n't even think of you. Why, it 's a downright scandal. And it 's impossible even to repeat the things people are saying about you; it even makes me ashamed. Well, if I could only have known this beforehand, I 'd have given her . . . ."

"Get out, you devil, I tell you for the last

time!"—yelled Pyetushkóff, but without stirring from his place or raising his head.

"Good mercy, Iván Afanásievitch!"—went on the implacable Onísim.—"I 'm telling you for your own good. Spit on the whole thing, Iván Afanásievitch, simply spit on it, heed me. If you won't do that, I 'll fetch the vile woman hither; you can get rid of her at once. You will laugh at it yourself afterward; you will say to me: 'Onísim, it 's amazing what things one does sometimes!'—Come, judge for yourself: you know that such as she are as plentiful with us as dogs .... all you have to do is to whistle ...."

Pyetushkóff sprang from the divan like a madman .... but, to the astonishment of Onísim, who had already raised both hands on a level with his cheeks, he sat down again, as though some one had knocked the legs out from under him. ... Tears rolled down over his pale face, a tuft of hair stood out over his temple, his eyes gazed dimly forth .... his distorted lips quivered .... his head sank on his breast.

Onísim looked at Pyetushkóff, and flung himself heavily on his knees.

"Dear little father, Iván Afanásievitch,"—he cried;—"your Well-Born! Please to chastise me, fool that I am! I have troubled you, Iván Afanásievitch. ... How dared I! Please to chastise me, your Well-Born. .. Is it worth while for you to weep because of my stupid

speeches . . . . dear little father, Iván Afanásievitch. . . ."

But Pyetushkóff did not even look at his servant, turned away, and huddled down again in one corner of the divan.

Onísim rose, went to his master, stood over him, and clutched at his own hair a couple of times.

"Won't you undress, dear little father? . . . You 'd better go to bed . . . . you 'd better eat a bit . . . . please don't grieve. . . . 'T is only with half-sorrow, all this amounts to nothing . . . . everything will come right,"—he said to him every two minutes.

But Pyetushkóff did not rise from the divan, and only shrugged his shoulders from time to time, and drew his knees up to his body. . . .

Onísim never left him all night long. Toward morning Pyetushkóff fell asleep, but not for long. At seven o'clock he rose from the divan, pale, dishevelled, exhausted, and called for tea.

Onísim prepared the samovár obsequiously and briskly.

"Iván Afanásievitch,"—he began, at last, in a timid voice,—"you are not pleased to be angry with me, are you?"

"What should I be angry with thee about, Onísim?"—replied poor Pyetushkóff.—"Thou wert entirely right yesterday, and I agree with thee perfectly about everything."

"I only did it out of zeal, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . ."

"I know that it was out of zeal."

Pyetushkóff fell silent, and dropped his eyes.

Onísim saw that things were in a bad way.

"Iván Afanásievitch,"—he began suddenly.

"What?"

"I 'll bring Vasilísa hither, if you like?"

Pyetushkóff crimsoned.

"No, Onísim, I don't like." ("Yes, let it go! she 'll come!"—he thought to himself.)—"I must display firmness. All this is folly. Yesterday . . . you know . . . . 'T is a disgrace. Thou art right. I must make an end of all this at one blow, as the saying is. Is n't that so?"

"'T is the plain truth you deign to speak, Iván Afanásievitch."

Again Pyetushkóff buried himself in thought. He was amazed at himself; he did not seem to recognise himself. He sat motionless and stared straight at the floor. His thoughts were in a commotion within him, like smoke or mist, and his breast felt heavy and empty at one and the same time.

"Well, what does it all amount to, after all?"—he sometimes thought, and calmed down again.—"Nonsense, self-indulgence!"—he said aloud, and passed his hand over his face, shook himself, and again his hand fell on his knees, again his eyes riveted themselves on the floor.

Onísim gazed attentively and sorrowfully at his master.

Pyetushkóff raised his head.

"Tell me, Onísim,"—he began,—"is it true that such witches' philters do exist?"

"They do, sir, certainly, sir,"—replied Onísim, thrusting out his leg.—"Now, for example, you know Under-Officer Krupovátoff, don't you? . . His brother was ruined through witchcraft. They bewitched him to a common old woman, to a cook, just think of that! They gave him a bit of plain rye bread to eat, with the spell, of course. So then Krupovátoff's brother fell head over heels in love with the cook, and ran about everywhere after the cook; he simply adored her, and could never gaze his fill. Whatever she bade him do, he obeyed on the instant. Even in the presence of others, in the presence of strangers, she made a display of her power over him. Well, and she drove him into a consumption at last. So he died, did Krupovátoff's brother. And she was a cook, and she is still, and old, very old." (Onísim took a pinch of snuff.)—"Damn all those hussies and females."

"She does n't love me at all—that is clear; in short, there can be no doubt of that,"—muttered Pyetushkóff in a low voice, making motions with his head and hands the while, as though he were explaining to an entirely strange man a thing of which he was wholly ignorant.

"Yes,"—pursued Onísim,—"there are such women."

"There are,"—repeated Pyetushkóff, dejectedly, not exactly in a tone of inquiry, nor yet as though surprised.

Onísim surveyed his master attentively.

"Iván Afanásievitch,"—he began,—"had n't you better take a bite of something?"

"Take a bite of something?"—repeated Pyetushkóff.

"Or would n't you like your pipe?"

"Pipe?"—repeated Pyetushkóff.

"So that 's what it has come to!"—growled Onísim: "this means that he 's gone daft."

VIII

The clumping of boots resounded in the anteroom, and the customary suppressed cough which announces the arrival of an inferior person made itself audible there.—Onísim went out, but immediately returned accompanied by a tiny soldier of the garrison with the face of an old woman, clad in a patched overcoat which had been worn to the point of turning yellow, devoid of trousers, and devoid of neckcloth. Pyetushkóff started—but the soldier drew himself up in military fashion, wished him good morning, and handed him a large envelope sealed with the official seal. The envelope contained a note from the

Major in command of the garrison: he ordered Pyetushkóff to him instantly and without delay.

Pyetushkóff turned the note over in his hands —and could not refrain from asking the messenger: "Did he know why the Major had ordered him to present himself?"—although he understood perfectly the utter futility of such a question.

"We cannot know!"[1]—shouted the soldier with an effort, but in a barely audible voice, as though he were only half awake.

"And he is not ordering the other officers to him?" went on Pyetushkóff.

"We cannot know!"—shouted the soldier a second time, in the same sort of tone.

"Very well, go,"—said Pyetushkóff.

The soldier made a military turn to the left, stamping his foot as he did so, and slapping himself with the palm of his hand lower down than the spine (that was the style in the "twenties"), and withdrew.

Pyetushkóff silently exchanged glances with Onísim, who immediately assumed an anxious air —and went to the Major.

This Major was a man of sixty, corpulent and awkward, with a swollen, red face, a short neck, and a perpetual tremor in his fingers, which arose from a too profuse use of vodka. He belonged to the category of so-called "Bourbons," that is

[1] The official form of "I don't know."—Translator.

to say, of soldiers who had advanced in the service from the lower ranks, had taught himself to read and write, and spoke with difficulty, partly on account of asthma, partly from inability to comprehend his own thought. His temperament exhibited all the variations known to science: in the morning, before vodka, he was melancholy; in the middle of the day, choleric; and toward evening, phlegmatic—that is to say, at that time he only snuffled and bellowed, until he was put to bed. Iván Afanásievitch presented himself to him during his choleric period. He found him sitting on a divan, in his dressing-gown open at the breast, and with a pipe in his teeth. A fat, crop-eared cat had cuddled down beside him.

"Aha! So he has come!"—growled the Major, turning askance upon Pyetushkóff his leaden little eyes, and without stirring from his place.—"Come now, sit down;—come, I 'll give it to you well.—I 've had my eye on the watch for fellows of your stamp this long time . . . yes, I have."

Pyetushkóff sank down on a chair.

"Because,"—burst out the Major, with an unexpected impulse of his whole body,—"you are an officer, you know; so you must conduct yourself according to regulations.—If you were a soldier, I would simply give you a whipping,—and that would be the end of it; but you happen to be an officer. Is n't it outrageous? You

ought to be ashamed of yourself. Do you think it 's nice? "

" Permit me to inquire to what these hints point? "—Pyetushkóff was beginning. . . .

" No arguing with me! I have a deadly hatred of that. I 've told you I don't like it; well, and that 's all there is to be said! There now, your hooks are not according to regulations; what a disgrace!—He sits day after day in a bake-shop; and he 's a nobleman to boot! He has set up a petticoat there—and there he sits.—Well, damn her, that petticoat!—And they actually say that he puts the loaves in the oven himself.—He sullies his uniform . . . . yes."

" Permit me to report,"—said Pyetushkóff, whose heart turned cold,—" that all this, so far as I can judge, refers to my private life, so to speak. . . ."

" Don't argue with me, I tell you!—Private life—he dares to argue! If I had anything against you on the score of the service, I 'd send you straight off to the *gward*-house!—*Allé marshir!*—Because I 'm sworn to do it.—A whole birch-grove was, probably, used up on me myself: so I know the service; all those proceedings are very familiar to me. But you are to understand, I refer in particular to the uniform. Thou art disgracing the uniform—yes, I 'm acting like a father . . . . yes. Because all that is entrusted to me. I must answer for it.—And here you are

arguing!"—shouted the Major, with a sudden access of ferocity, and his face turned purple, and froth made its appearance on his lips, and the cat elevated its tail and sprang to the floor.—"Yes, and do you know. . . Yes, do you know, that I can . . . . that I can do everything! everything, everything!—And do you understand to whom you are talking?—Your superior officer commands—and you argue! Your superior officer. . . . Your superior officer! . . ."

Here the Major even began to cough and rattle in his throat—and poor Pyetushkóff merely drew himself up and turned pale, as he sat on the edge of his chair.

"See that everything," . . . . pursued the trembling Major, waving his hand imperiously, —"see that everything . . . . toes the mark! First-class behaviour!—I won't tolerate any disorder! Thou mayest consort with whom thou choosest—I don't care a fig about that! But if thou art well-born,—well, then, you know, act like a nobleman!—I won't have thee putting the loaves in the oven! I won't have thee calling a draggle-tailed, low-born woman 'aunty'! I won't have thee disgracing the uniform! Hold thy tongue! Don't argue!"

The Major's voice broke. He took breath, and turning toward the door of the anteroom, he shouted:—"Frólka, thou rascal! Herrings!"

Pyetushkóff rose briskly and darted out, almost

knocking off his legs the page-boy who was running in with sliced herrings and a huge caraffe of vodka on a yellow tray.

"Hold thy tongue! Don't argue!"—resounded behind Pyetushkóff the spasmodic exclamations of the incensed commander.

IX

A STRANGE feeling took possession of Iván Afanásievitch, when he suddenly found himself in the street.

"Why, what makes it seem as though I were walking in my sleep?"—he thought to himself. —"Have I lost my mind, I 'd like to know? For this certainly is incredible. Come, damn it! she has ceased to love me, and I have ceased to love her, well, and . . . . what is there remarkable about that?"

Pyetushkóff contracted his brows in a frown.

"There must be an end to this, in short,"—he said almost aloud;—"I will go and have a definitive explanation for the last time, so that afterward not a trace of it may be left."

With hasty strides, Pyetushkóff betook himself to the bake-shop. The nephew of Luká the hired man, a diminutive brat, the friend and intimate of the goat which lived in the courtyard, sprang briskly to the wicket-gate as soon as he caught sight of Iván Afanásievitch.

Praskóvya Ivánovna came out to greet Pyetushkóff.

"Is n't your niece at home?"—asked Pyetushkóff.

"No, sir, she is n't."

Pyetushkóff inwardly rejoiced at Vasilísa's absence.

"I have come to have an explanation with you, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"What about, dear little father?"

"Why, about this. You understand that after all . . . . that has taken place . . . . after such goings-on, so to say" (Pyetushkóff was getting somewhat confused) . . . . "in a word. . . . . But, please don't be angry with me."

"Yes, sir."

"On the contrary, enter into my position, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"Yes, sir."

"You are a sensible woman, you understand yourself, that . . . . that I can no longer come to your house."

"Yes, sir,"—said Praskóvya Ivánovna in a sing-song tone.

"Believe me, I greatly regret it; I confess it even gives me pain, genuine pain. . . ."

"You must know best, sir,"—returned Praskóvya Ivánovna, with composure.—"It must be as you like, sir. And now, if you will allow me, I 'll give you your bill."

Pyetushkóff had not in the least expected such ready assent. On the whole, he had not desired "assent"; he would have liked merely to frighten Praskóvya Ivánovna, and especially Vasilísa. He was discomfited.

"I know,"—he began,—"that this will not be in the least displeasing to Vasilísa; on the contrary, I think she will be glad."

Praskóvya Ivánovna got her reckoning-frame[1] and began to rattle the bone balls.

"On the other hand,"—went on Pyetushkóff, who waxed more and more agitated,—"if, for example, Vasilísa would explain to me her conduct . . . . possibly . . . . I . . . . although, of course . . . . I don't know, possibly, I might see that, in reality, there was no harm whatever in it."

"You owe me thirty-seven rubles and forty kopéks, paper money, dear little father,"—remarked Praskóvya Ivánovna.—"Here, would you like to verify the account?"

Iván Afanásievitch answered never a word.

"Eighteen dinners at seventy kopéks apiece: twelve rubles sixty kopéks."

"So you and I are to part, Praskóvya Ivánovna?"

"How can it be helped, dear little father?

[1] The use of the abacus is very extensive, even at the present day, among the merchant class in Russia. They perform long and intricate calculations with amazing facility.—Translator.

Such things do happen. Twelve samovárs,[1] at ten kopéks apiece. . . ."

"But just tell me, Praskóvya Ivánovna, where did Vasilísa go, and why did she . . ."

"Why, I did n't question her, dear little father. . . . . One ruble twenty kopéks, silver money."

Iván Afanásievitch became thoughtful.

"Kvas and sour-cabbage soup,"—went on Praskóvya Ivánovna, separating the beads on her counting-frame, not with her forefinger, but with her third finger,—"to the amount of half a ruble, silver. Sugar and rolls for tea, half a ruble, silver. Four packets of tobacco, bought by your order, eighty kopéks, silver. Paid the tailor, Kupriyán Apollónoff . . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch suddenly raised his head, put out his hand, and mixed up the beads.

"What are you doing, dear little father?!"—said Praskóvya Ivánovna.—"Don't you believe me?"

"Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—replied Pyetushkóff, with a hurried smile,—"I have changed my mind. I was only jesting, you know. Let us, rather, remain friends, as of old. What nonsense! How can you and I part, tell me, please?"

Praskóvya Ivánovna hung her head and did not answer him.

"Come, we have had our quarrel out—and

[1] Meaning that the samovár had been prepared twelve times.—Translator.

that 's the end of it,"—went on Iván Afanásievitch, pacing the room, rubbing his hands, and, as it were, entering again upon his former rights.—" Amen! see here, I 'd better smoke a pipe."

Praskóvya Ivánovna still did not stir from the spot. . . .

" I see that you are angry with me,"—said Pyetushkóff.—" Perhaps I have hurt your feelings. Come, what of that? Be magnanimous and forgive."

" Hurt my feelings, forsooth, dear little father! How have you hurt them? . . . Only, if you please, dear little father,"—added Praskóvya Ivánovna, with an inclination,—" be so good as not to come to our house any more."

" What? "

" It is n't proper for you to associate with us, your Well-Born. So please do us the favour. . . ."

" But why? " stammered the astounded Pyetushkóff.

" Why, just because, dear little father. Show us that divine favour."

" But no, Praskóvya Ivánovna, we must have an explanation! . . . ."

" Vasilísa beseeches you, dear little father. She says: ' I 'm grateful, very grateful, and I feel it, only, in future, your Well-Born, relieve me of your presence.' "

Praskóvya Ivánovna bowed down almost to Pyetushkóff's feet.

"Vasilísa, you say, asks me not to come?"

"Exactly so, dear little father, your Well-Born. As you were pleased to favour us with a visit to-day, and said that you did not wish to visit us any more,—that is to say, I was just delighted, dear little father, and thinks I to myself: 'There now, and thank God, that everything has come right.' For otherwise, my own tongue would n't have twisted itself round to speak. . . . Show us that favour, dear little father."

Pyetushkóff reddened and paled almost simultaneously. Praskóvya Ivánovna still continued to make obeisances. . . .

"Very well,"—exclaimed Iván Afanásievitch, sharply.—"Good-bye."

He wheeled round abruptly and put on his cap.

"And about the little bill, dear little father. . . ."

"Send it . . . my orderly will pay you."

Pyetushkóff left the bake-shop with a firm tread, and did not even glance round.

X

Two weeks passed. At first Pyetushkóff kept up his courage extremely well, went out in society, and visited his comrades, with the exception, of course, of Bublítzyn; but, despite the exag-

gerated praises of Onísim, he nearly went out of his mind, at last, with grief, jealousy, and tedium. Nothing afforded him any consolation except chats with Onísim about Vasilísa. Pyetushkóff began the conversation, and was always the aggressor; Onísim reluctantly answered him.

"But it is a strange thing,"—Iván Afanásievitch said, for example, as he lay on his divan, while Onísim, according to his custom, stood leaning against the door, with his hands clasped behind him:—"when you come to think of it: come, now, what did I see in that girl? There 's nothing remarkable about her, it strikes me. She is kind-hearted, it is true. One must not deny her that merit."

"Kind-hearted — indeed!"— replied Onísim with displeasure.

"Come, Onísim,"—went on Pyetushkóff,—"one must speak the truth. Now that is an affair of the past: it makes no difference to me now, but justice is justice. Thou dost not know her. She is extremely kind-hearted. She never lets a single beggar go empty-handed away: she gives him at least a crust of bread. Well, and she has a cheerful disposition—that must also be said of her."

"There you go, inventing still! Where did you find her cheerful disposition?"

"I tell thee . . . thou dost not know her. And she is not greedy of money, either . . . .

that 's another point. She does not have an eye on her own interests, there 's no denying that. Well, and although I . . . . yet I gave her nothing, as thou knowest."

"That 's exactly why she threw you over."

"No, that was not the reason!"—replied Pyetushkóff with a sigh.

"Why, you 're in love with her even now,"—retorted Onísim, viciously.—"You 'd be glad enough to go back to your former position."

"There thou art talking nonsense. No, brother, evidently, thou dost not know me either. They turned me out of the house, and I won't go and make obeisance to them after that. No, excuse me. No, I tell thee, believe me, all that is now a thing of the past."

"God grant it! God grant it!"

"But why should n't I be just to her, even now? Come, now, if I were to say that she is not good-looking,—who would believe me?"

"A fine beauty you have found!"

"Come, find me,—well, name to me any one who is better-looking than she. . . . ."

"Well, then, go back to her! . . . ."

"Eká! But is that what I am talking for, pray? Understand me. . . ."

"Okh! I understand you,"—replied Onísim with a heavy sigh.

Another week passed. Pyetushkóff ceased even to talk with his Onísim; he ceased to go out.

From morning till night he lay on his divan, with his hands thrown up over his head. He began to grow thin and pale, he ate reluctantly and hurriedly, he did not smoke at all. Onísim merely shook his head as he looked at him.

" Surely you are not feeling well, Iván Afanásievitch,"—he said to him more than once.

" Yes, I 'm all right,"—replied Pyetushkóff.

At last, one fine day (Onísim was not at home), Pyetushkóff rose, rummaged in his chest of drawers, donned his heavy cloak, although the sun was pretty hot, emerged stealthily into the street, and a quarter of an hour later returned home again. . . . He was carrying something under his cloak. . . .

Onísim was not at home. All the morning he had been sitting in his tiny den, thinking matters over, grumbling and swearing through his set teeth, and, at last, he had set off to see Vasilísa.

He found her in the bake-shop. Praskóvya Ivánovna was asleep on the oven, snoring regularly and languidly.

" Akh, good morning, Onísim Sergyéevitch," —said Vasilísa with a smile.—" Why have n't we seen you this long time? "

" Morning."

" What makes you so downcast? Won't you have some tea? "

" 'T is not a question of me now,"—returned Onísim, testily.

"What, then?"

"What! Dost not thou understand me, pray? 'What?!' What hast thou done to my master? Come, tell me that."

"What have I done?"

"Thou hast done something. . . . Just come and look at him. The first anybody knows, he 'll fall ill and die altogether."

"How am I to blame, Onísim Sergyéitch?"

"How?!—God knows. He fairly adores thee, see? But thou hast treated him as though he were a fellow like me, the Lord forgive thee! 'Don't come,' sayest thou, 'I 'm tired of thee.' Anyway, if he is n't an important person, he 's a gentleman all the same. He 's a nobleman, all the same. . . . Dost thou understand that?"

"But he 's so tiresome, Onísim Sergyéitch. . . ."

"Tiresome! But thou must needs always have jovial men!"

"Well, he 's not exactly tiresome; but he 's such an irascible, jealous man."

"Akh, thou Ástrakhan Tzarévna Milikitrísa! See there, now, he has worried thee!"

"Why, you yourself, Onísim Sergyéitch, as I remember, were angry with him. 'Why does he associate with them,' says you; 'why is he always going to them?'"

"What of that? Was I to praise him for that, I 'd like to know?"

"Well, then, why are you angry with me now? You see, he has stopped coming."

Onísim even stamped.

"But what am I to do with him, if he 's such a crazy man?"—he added, lowering his voice.

"Then how am I to blame? How can I help you?"

"This is how: come along with me to him."

"The Lord forbid!"

"Why wilt not thou go?"

"Why won't I go to him? Good mercy!"

"Why? And then, see here, he said that thou wert kind-hearted. I see how kind-hearted thou art."

"But what good can I do him?"

"Well, I know all about that. Things must be pretty bad if I come to thee. Evidently, I could think of no other means."

Onísim paused for a moment.

"Come, let 's go, Vasilísa; please come along."

"But I don't want to associate with him again, Onísim Sergyéitch. . . ."

"That is n't necessary—who told thee that it was? But so,—say a couple of words to him: 'Why do you deign to grieve?'—say . . . 'Stop it. . . .' That 's all."

"Really, Onísim Sergyéitch. . . ."

"Come now, dost want me to bow down before thee, pray? Come, if thou wilt have it—

here 's an obeisance for thee . . . . and here 's another obeisance for thee."

" But, really. . . ."

" What a woman! Even honours don't move her! . . . ."

At last Vasilísa consented, threw a kerchief over her head, and went off in company with Onísim.

" Stand here a bit, in the anteroom,"—he said to her, when they reached Pyetushkóff's quarters,—" and I 'll go and announce to the master. . . . ."

He entered Iván Afanásievitch's room.

Pyetushkóff was standing in the middle of the room, with both hands thrust into his pockets, with his legs straddled to an exaggerated degree and rocking slowly backward and forward. His face was flaming, his eyes were beaming.

" Good morning, Onísim,"—he lisped in a friendly way, pronouncing the consonants of his words very badly and languidly:—" Good morning, my good fellow. While thou wert gone, I . . . . he, he, he! "—Pyetushkóff began to laugh and peck forward with his nose.—" Really, now, he, he, he! . . . . However,"—he added, striving to assume a dignified mien:—" I 'm all right." —He tried to lift one leg, but came near toppling over and, by way of putting a good face on the matter, he said in a bass voice:—" Man, give me my pipe! "

Onísim stared in amazement at his master, and glanced around. . . . On the window-sill stood an empty, dark-green bottle with the label: "The Best Jamaica Rum."

"I have drunk it, brother, and that 's all,"—went on Pyetushkóff,—"I took and drank it, and that 's all there is to say. And where hast thou been? tell me . . . don't be ashamed . . . tell me. Thou narratest well."

"Good gracious, Iván Afanásievitch,"—roared Onísim.

"So be it. And so be it. And I forgive my dear one, my dear one,"—returned Pyetushkóff, with a vague wave of his hand. "I forgive everybody, I forgive thee, and I forgive Vasilísa, and everybody, I forgive everybody. But I 've drunk it, brother. . . . I 've dru-unk it, brother. . . . What 's that?"—he suddenly cried, pointing at the door of the anteroom: "Who 's there?"

"There 's nobody there,"—hastily replied Onísim.—"Who should be there? . . . Where are you going?"

"No, no,"—repeated Pyetushkóff, wresting himself from Onísim's hands:—"Let me go,—I saw,—don't tell me,—I saw there,—let me go. . . . . Vasilísa!"—he suddenly shrieked.

Pyetushkóff turned pale.

"Well . . . . Well, why dost not thou come in?"—he began at last.—"Come in, Vasilísa, come in! I 'm very glad to see thee, Vasilísa."

Vasilísa looked at Onísim—and entered the room. Pyetushkóff approached her. . . . He was breathing deeply and at long intervals. Onísim watched them. Vasilísa cast timorous, sidelong glances at both of them.

"Sit down, Vasilísa,"—began Iván Afanásievitch again:—"I thank thee for coming. Excuse me, if I . . . . how shall I say it? . . . that I am in such an unseemly state. I could not foresee this, I could n't possibly, you must agree to that. Come, sit down here, on the divan. . . . I think I am expressing myself correctly?"

Vasilísa sat down.

"Well, good morning,"—went on Pyetushkóff.—"And how art thou getting along? What nice things hast thou been doing?"

"I 'm well, thank God, Iván Afanásievitch. And how are you?"

"I? as thou seest! Killed! And killed by whom? Killed by thee, Vasilísa. But I 'm not angry with thee. Only, I 'm killed. Just ask this man here." (He pointed at Onísim.) "Don't mind if I am drunk. I am drunk, that 's a fact; only, I 'm killed. I 'm drunk because I 'm killed."

"God have mercy, Iván Afanásievitch!"

"Killed, Vasilísa, I tell thee. Do thou believe me. I have never deceived thee. Well, and how is thy aunt?"

"Well, Iván Afanásievitch. Many thanks."

Pyetushkóff began to stagger violently.

"But you are ill to-day, Iván Afanásievitch. You ought to go to bed."

"No, I 'm well, Vasilísa. No, don't say that I 'm not well; but say, rather, that I have plunged into vice, that I have lost my morality. That would be just. I should not dispute that."

Iván Afanásievitch swayed backward. Onísim sprang forward and supported his master.

"And who 's to blame? I 'll tell thee, if thou wishest, who 's to blame; shall I?

"I am to blame, I, first of all. What ought I to have done? I ought to have said to thee: 'Vasilísa, I love thee.' Well, good. Come, wilt thou marry me? Wilt thou? 'T is true that thou art of the burgher class, let us say; but that is nothing. That sort of thing is done. There was an acquaintance of mine, for example: he also married in that way. He took a Finnish woman. He went and married her. And thou wouldst have been well off with me. I am a kind man, God is my witness, I am! Thou must not mind if I am drunk, but rather do thou look into my heart. Here, now, ask this . . . . man. So it turns out that I am the guilty person. But now, of course, I am killed."

Iván Afanásievitch grew more and more in need of Onísim's support.

"And, nevertheless, 't was a sin on thy part, a great sin. I loved thee, I revered thee, I . . . . what did I not do? And even now I 'm ready

to be married this very minute. Wilt thou? Only say so, and we 'll be married immediately. Only thou hast mortally wounded my feelings . . . . mortally. Thou mightest have refused me thyself, or through thy aunt, through that horrible fat woman. For thou wert my only joy. For I am a homeless man, a poor, lonely orphan! Whom can I persuade to love me now? Who is there to say a kind word to me? For I 'm a poor, lonely man,—a full orphan,—as poor as a church mouse. Ask thi . . . ." Iván Afanásievitch fell to weeping.—" Vasilísa, hearken to what I have to say to thee,"—he went on:—" permit me to go to thee as of yore. Be not afraid . . . . I will be very discreet. Do thou go to whomsoever thou wishest, I won't mind: just that, without reproaches, seest thou. Come, dost thou consent? Wouldst thou like to have me go down on my knees? "—(And Iván Afanásievitch began to bend his knees, but Onísim caught him under the arm-pits.)—" Let me go! 'T is no business of thine! 'T is a question of the happiness of a whole life, dost understand? And thou art in the way. . . ."

Vasilísa did not know what to say.

" Thou wilt not . . . Well, as thou seest fit! God bless thee! In that case, farewell! Farewell, Vasilísa. I wish thee all happiness and prosperity . . . . and I . . . . and I . . . ."

And Pyetushkóff wept in torrents. Onísim

held him up from behind with all his might . . . first making a very wry face, then beginning to cry himself. . . . And Vasilísa wept also.

XI

Ten years later, one could encounter on the streets of the town of O*** a thin man with a small, red nose, clad in an old green coat with a greasy velveteen collar. He occupied a tiny garret in the bake-shop with which we are acquainted. Praskóvya Ivánovna was no longer in the land of the living. Her niece, Vasilísa, managed the business, assisted by her husband, a red-haired, purblind petty burgher named Demofónt. The man in the green coat had one weakness: he was fond of getting drunk, but he behaved himself peaceably, nevertheless. My readers have, probably, recognised in him Iván Afanásievitch.

THE TWO FRIENDS

(1853)

THE TWO FRIENDS

IN the spring of 184.., Borís Andréitch Vyazovnín, a young man of six-and-twenty, arrived at his hereditary estate, situated in one of the Governments of the central zone of Russia. He had only just retired from the service,—"owing to family circumstances,"—and was intending to occupy himself with the management of his property. A happy thought, of course! Only Borís Andréitch conceived it, as is generally the case, against his own will. His revenues were diminishing year by year, his debts were increasing: he had become convinced of the impossibility of remaining in the service, of living in the capital,—in a word, of living as he had lived hitherto, and he had decided, most reluctantly, to devote several years to improving those "family circumstances," thanks to which he suddenly found himself in the rural wilds.

Vyazovnín found his estate in disorder, his manor neglected, the house almost falling to ruin; he changed his superintendent, and reduced the number of house-serfs; he cleaned out two or three rooms, and ordered new boards to be ap-

plied at points where the roof leaked; but he undertook no harsh measures, and did not plan any improvements, as the result of the, apparently, simple idea that one should first find out, at least, what he wants to improve. . . . So, then, he set to work to learn about farming, and began. as the saying is, by penetrating into the core of the matter. It must be admitted that he penetrated into the core of the matter without any special ardour, and without haste. Being unaccustomed to the country, he was terribly bored, and often could not imagine how and where he was to pass the whole long day. He had a good many neighbours, but he did not consort with them—not because he avoided them, but simply because he did not happen to come in contact with them. At last, when autumn had already come, he chanced to make the acquaintance of one of his nearest neighbours.

This neighbour's name was Piótr Vasílitch Krupítzyn. He had formerly served in the cavalry, and had retired with the rank of lieutenant. Between his peasants and Vyazovnín's peasants, from time immemorial, a controversy had raged over two and a half desyatínas of mowing-land. They not infrequently came to blows; the hayricks mysteriously travelled from place to place; various unpleasantnesses occurred; and, in all probability, this quarrel would have continued for many years more, had not Krupítzyn, on learning

indirectly of Borís Andréitch's pacific qualities, gone to him for a personal conference. The results of this conference were very agreeable. In the first place, the matter was settled forthwith and forever, to the mutual satisfaction of the property-owners; and, in the second place, they took a great liking to each other, began to see each other frequently, and by winter, they had already become so intimate that they were hardly ever separated.

And, nevertheless, they had very little in common. Vyazovnín as a man who, although not wealthy himself, was the son of wealthy parents, had received a good education, had studied at the university, knew various languages, was fond of occupying himself with the perusal of books, and, in general, might be regarded as a cultivated man. Krupítzyn, on the contrary, spoke French indifferently, never took a book in his hand without some special need, and belonged rather to the category of uneducated men. In external appearance also the friends bore but little resemblance to each other: Vyazovnín was quite tall of stature, slender, fair-haired, and looked like an Englishman, kept his person, particularly his hands, very clean, dressed elegantly, and wore dandified neckcloths . . . . habits of the capital! Krupítzyn, on the contrary, was short of stature, round-shouldered, swarthy, black-haired, and went about winter and summer in a sort of sack-

overcoat, with protruding pockets, made of cloth of a bronze hue.

"I like this colour,"—he was wont to say,—"because it does n't show spots."

That colour really did not soil easily, but the cloth itself was pretty well besprinkled with spots, nevertheless. Vyazovnín was fond of good eating, and liked to talk about how agreeable it was to have good food, and what it meant to have taste; Krupítzyn ate everything which was set before him, so long as he had something for his jaws to work upon. If it happened to be cabbage-soup with buckwheat groats, he ladled up the soup with pleasure, and devoured the buckwheat groats; if he was offered thin foreign soup, he applied himself with equal readiness to the soup, and if there happened to be any buckwheat groats on hand, he poured it into his plate,—and it was all right. He loved kvas, according to his own expression, "like his own father." French wines, which he called "sour stuff," he could not endure, especially claret. Altogether, Krupítzyn was very far from being fastidious, while Vyazovnín changed his pocket-handkerchief twice a day. In a word, the friends, as we have said above, did not resemble each other. One thing they had in common: they were both what is called "nice young fellows, simple lads." Krupítzyn had been born so, and Vyazovnín had become so. In addition to this, both of them were

distinguished by the fact that neither liked anything in particular,—that is to say, had no particular passion or predilection for anything. Krupítzyn was seven or eight years older than Vyazovnín.

Their days passed in a rather monotonous manner. As a rule, in the morning, but not too early, —about nine o'clock,—Borís Andréitch was already sitting at the window, in a handsome dressing-gown open on the breast, with his hair brushed, all washed, in a snow-white shirt, with a book and a cup of tea. The door opened, and Piótr Vasílitch entered in his customary untidy condition. His hamlet lay only half a verst from Vyázovna (that was the name of Borís Andréitch's estate). Moreover, Piótr Vasílitch frequently stayed over night with Borís Andréitch.

"Ah, good morning!"—they both said simultaneously.—"How did you sleep?"

And thereupon Fediúshka (an urchin of eleven years, garbed as a page, whose very hair, which stood on end even on the back of his head, like a sandpiper's feathers in springtime, had a sleepy air) brought Piótr Vasílitch his dressing-gown of Bukhará stuff, and Piótr Vasílitch, after a preliminary grunt, donned the dressing-gown, and began on his tea and his pipe. Then conversation began—leisurely conversation, with pauses and rests. They talked about the weather, about the preceding day, about field

labours and the price of grain; they also talked about the landed gentry of the vicinity, male and female. In the early days of his acquaintanceship with Borís Andréitch, Piótr Vasílitch had regarded it as his duty, and had even delighted in the chance, to interrogate his neighbour concerning the life of the capital, concerning science and culture in general,—and concerning lofty topics as a whole. Borís Andréitch's replies had interested him, frequently surprised him, and arrested his attention; but, at the same time, they had caused him some fatigue, so that all such conversations speedily came to an end; and Borís Andréitch himself, on his side, did not display any superfluous anxiety to renew them. Occasionally thereafter—and that at rare intervals—Piótr Vasílitch would suddenly ask Borís Andréitch, for instance, "what sort of a thing is the electrical telegraph?" and after listening to Borís Andréitch's not entirely lucid explanation, he would say, after a pause: "Yes, that 's wonderful!" and for a long time thereafter he would not inquire about any learned subject whatsoever. The conversations between them were mostly of the following nature. Piótr Vasílitch, for example, would collect the smoke from his pipe, and emitting it through his nostrils, would inquire:

"What 's that new girl you 've got? I saw her at the back door, Borís Andréitch?"

Borís Andréitch, in his turn, would raise his cigar to his mouth, take a couple of puffs, and after swallowing a sip of cold tea, would articulate:

"What new girl?"

Piótr Vasílitch would bend somewhat to one side, and staring through the window into the courtyard, where a dog had just bitten a bare-legged urchin on the calf, would reply:

"The very fair-haired one . . . quite pretty."

"Ah!"—Borís Andréitch would exclaim, after a brief pause:—"that 's my new laundress."

"Where does she come from?"—asks Piótr Vasílitch, as though surprised.

"From Moscow. She has been there for training."

And then both are silent for a while.

"And how many laundresses have you in all, Borís Andréitch?"—asks Piótr Vasílitch, staring attentively at the tobacco which is flashing with a crisp, crackling noise under the hot ashes in his pipe.

"Three,"—replies Borís Andréitch.

"Three! I have only one. And that one has hardly anything to do. You know yourself, I think, how much washing I have!"

"H'm!"—replies Borís Andréitch.

And the conversation ceases for a time.

In these pursuits the morning passed, and breakfast-time arrived; Piótr Vasílitch was par-

ticularly fond of his breakfast, and insisted that twelve o'clock is the very hour when a man feels hungry; and, in fact, at that hour, he ate so cheerily, with such healthy and agreeable appetite, that even a German would have rejoiced at the sight of him: so glorious a breakfast did Piótr Vasílitch make! Borís Andréitch ate much less; he was satisfied with a chicken cutlet, or a couple of soft-boiled eggs with butter and some English sauce in an artfully constructed and patented vessel, for which he had paid a heavy price, and which he privately considered disgusting, although he asserted that he could not eat a single morsel without it. After breakfast the two friends made the round of the farm, if the weather was good, or simply took a stroll, and looked to see how the young horses were coming on with their training, and so forth. Sometimes they went as far as Piótr Vasílitch's hamlet, and once in a while, they dropped into his little house.

This little house, tiny and rickety, bore more resemblance to the plain hovel of a house-serf than to the homestead of a landed proprietor. On the straw thatch, riddled all the way around with the nests of swallows and daws, grew green moss; of the two buildings constructed of aspen logs, formerly fitted together, one had fallen backward, and the other was nodding sideways, and had sunk into the ground: in a word, Piótr Vasí-

litch's house was wretched both outside and in. But Piótr Vasílitch did not fall into despondency: being a bachelor, and in general not an exacting man, he took little heed of the comforts of life, and contented himself with the fact that he had a place where he could take refuge, in case of need, from stormy weather and cold. His housekeeper, Makedóniya, a woman of middle age, very zealous and even honest, but unlucky, looked after his household: but nothing succeeded with her; the crockery got smashed, the linen got torn, the food was under-cooked or over-cooked. Piótr Vasílitch called her Caligula.

Being possessed of an innate inclination for hospitality, Piótr Vasílitch was fond of seeing guests at his house, and of entertaining them, notwithstanding the scantiness of his means. He made special efforts, and bustled more than usual when Borís Andréitch visited him; but, thanks to Makedóniya, who, moreover, nearly flew off her feet at every step with zeal, poor Piótr Vasílitch's entertainments always turned out extremely ill-starred, and were chiefly confined to a morsel of the raw-dried back of sturgeon, hardened with age, and a glass of vodka, concerning which he expressed himself with entire justice when he said that it was capital *against* the stomach. After a stroll, the two friends were wont to return to Borís Andréitch's house and dine in leisurely fashion. After having eaten as heartily

as though he had had no breakfast, Piótr Vasílitch would take himself off to some solitary nook and sleep two or three hours; Borís Andréitch, during that interval, read the foreign newspapers. In the evening, the two friends met together again: such friendship had sprung up between them! Sometimes they sat down to play at preference, just the two by themselves; sometimes they simply chatted in the same manner as in the morning; and it sometimes happened that Piótr Vasílitch would take his guitar from the wall, and sing various romances in a fairly agreeable tenor voice. Piótr Vasílitch was much fonder of music than was Borís Andréitch, who could not utter the name of Beethoven without enthusiasm, and who was perpetually making ready to order a piano from Moscow. In moments of sadness or dejection, Piótr Vasílitch had a habit of singing a romance which dated from the days of his service with his regiment. . . . With particular feeling, and somewhat through his nose, he would warble the following lines:

"No Frenchman runs our kitchen,
But an orderly cooks our dinner. . . .
The splendid Rode does not act,
Catalani does not sing. . . .
The trumpeter deftly sounds tattoo,
The quartermaster will come with his report."

Borís Andréitch now and then chimed in, but his voice was disagreeable and not true to pitch. About ten o'clock, and sometimes earlier, the friends separated . . . . and on the following day, the same thing began all over again.

So then, one day, as Piótr Vasílitch was sitting, according to his wont, opposite Borís Andréitch, in a somewhat oblique line, he stared at him with a good deal of intentness, and said in a thoughtful voice:

"I 'm surprised at one thing, Borís Andréitch. . . ."

"What 's that?"—asked the latter.

"This. You are a young man, clever, cultured: what possesses you to live in the country?"

Borís Andréitch gazed in astonishment at his neighbour.

"Surely you are aware, Piótr Vasílitch,"—he said at last,—"that if it were not for my circumstances. . . . Circumstances compel me, Piótr Vasílitch."

"Circumstances? Your circumstances don't count, so far. . . . With your estate you can exist. Get a position in the service."

And after a brief pause, Piótr Vasílitch added:

"If I were in your place, I would enter the uhlans."

"The uhlans? Why the uhlans in particular?"

"Because it seems to me it would be more fitting for you in the uhlans."

"But excuse me, you yourself served in the hussars, did you not?"

"I? Of course I did,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch with animation,—"and in what a regiment! You 'll not find another such regiment in all the world! 'T was a regiment of gold! The commanding officers, my comrades—what men they were! But you . . . I don't know why . . . but it seems to me that you ought to enter the uhlans. You are fair of complexion, and you have a slender figure: it all fits in."

"But excuse me, Piótr Vasílitch, you forget that, by virtue of the military regulations, I should have to begin with the rank of yunker. At my age that is somewhat embarrassing. I believe it is even prohibited."

"That 's a fact,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch, and dropped his eyes.—"Well, then, in that case, get married," he suddenly ejaculated, raising his head.

"Why, what a queer turn of thought you have to-day, Piótr Vasílitch!" exclaimed Borís Andréitch.

"Why is it queer? What 's the use, in fact, of living on like this? What are you waiting for? You 're only wasting time. I want to know what profit you will derive from not marrying?"

"But profit is not the point,"—began Borís Andréitch.

"No, permit me,"—Piótr Vasílitch interrupted him, unexpectedly flying into a passion.—"It 's amazing to me how afraid the young men of the present day are of marriage! I simply cannot understand it. You must n't mind my not being married, Borís Andréitch. Perhaps I have wished it, and have proposed it, and that 's what they did to me."

And here Piótr Vasílitch elevated the forefinger of his right hand, with its exterior turned toward Borís Andréitch.

"And with your property, how can you help marrying?"

Borís Andréitch gazed attentively at Piótr Vasílitch.

"Is it a cheerful matter, pray, to lead a bachelor life?"—went on Piótr Vasílitch.—"Eká, what a marvel! here 's mirth for you! . . . Really, the young men of the present day amaze me."

And Piótr Vasílitch with irritation knocked the ashes out of his Turkish pipe on the arm of his chair, and blew into the tchubúk.

"But who told you, Piótr Vasílitch, that I do not intend to marry?" said Borís Andréitch, slowly.

Piótr Vasílitch stopped short, motionless, just as he was, with his fingers thrust into his

tobacco-pouch of dark-red velvet embroidered with spangles. Borís Andréitch's words surprised him.

"Yes,"—went on Borís Andréitch:—"I am ready to marry. Find me a bride, and I will marry."

"Truly?"

"Truly."

"No, by God?"

"What ails you, Piótr Vasílitch? By God, I 'm not jesting."

Piótr Vasílitch filled his pipe.

"Well, look out for yourself, Borís Andréitch. You shall have a bride."

"Very good,"—returned Borís Andréitch:—"but hearken to me—why, in reality, do you wish to get me married?"

"Why, because, as I look at you, you have no capacity for doing nothing."

Borís Andréitch smiled.

"On the contrary, up to this moment it has struck me that I am a master-hand at that."

"You don't understand me rightly,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, and changed the conversation.

Two days later, Piótr Vasílitch presented himself before his neighbour, not in his habitual paletot-sack, but in a frock-coat, black as the raven's wing, with a high waist, tiny buttons and long sleeves. Piótr Vasílitch's moustache looked almost black with dye, and his hair, tightly curled

in front, in the shape of two long sausages, glistened brightly with pomade. A big velvet stock with a satin band tightly compressed Piótr Vasílitch's throat and imparted a solemn immobility and a festive mien to the entire upper portion of his body.

"What is the meaning of this toilet?"—inquired Borís Andréitch.

"The meaning of this toilet,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch, sinking into an arm-chair, but not with his customary free-and-easy manner,—"is that you are to order the calash to be harnessed up. We are going for a drive."

"Whither?"

"To the bride."

"To what bride?"

"Why, have you forgotten already what you and I were talking about three days ago?"

Borís Andréitch burst out laughing, but in his soul he was disconcerted.

"Good gracious! Piótr Vasílitch,—why, that was only a joke."

"A joke? Did n't you swear at the time that you were not jesting? No, excuse me, Borís Andréitch, but you must keep your word. I have already taken the proper measures."

Borís Andréitch was more disconcerted than ever.

"But what measures are you referring to?" he asked.

"Oh, don't you worry. . . . What do you think! I have only warned one of our lady neighbours, a most charming person, that you and I intend to call upon her to-day."

"What neighbour is that?"

"Wait, and you will find out. Here, now, first dress yourself, and order the horses to be harnessed."

Borís Andréitch cast an irresolute glance around him.

"Really, Piótr Vasílitch, I don't know what possesses you . . . . just see what the weather is like."

"Never mind the weather; it 's always like that."

"And have we far to go?"

"Fifteen versts."

Borís Andréitch said nothing for a while.

"But we might breakfast first, at least!"

"Breakfast is all right—we can do that. Do you know what, Borís Andréitch: go and dress yourself now, and I 'll give all the necessary orders without you; a little vodka, a bit of dried sturgeon—that does not take long, and they 'll feed us at our little widow's—there 's no need of worrying about that."

"Is she a widow?"—asked Borís Andréitch, who was already at the door of his study, turning round.

Piótr Vasílitch wagged his head.

"You shall see, you shall see."

Borís Andréitch left the room and locked the door behind him, while Piótr Vasílitch, when he was left alone, gave orders concerning both the calash and the breakfast.

Borís Andréitch took a pretty long time to dress. Piótr Vasílitch was already draining his second glass of vodka, with a slight frown and a melancholy expression, when Borís Andréitch made his appearance on the threshold of his study. He had taken great pains with his toilet. He wore a foppishly-cut capacious black coat, whose dull mass contrasted agreeably with the dull gleam of his light-grey trousers, a low black stock, and a handsome, dark-blue waistcoat; a gold chain, fastened by a hook through the lowest buttonhole, lost itself modestly in a side pocket; his thin boots squeaked aristocratically, and along with the appearance of Borís Andréitch, the odour of ess-bouquet mingled with the odour of fresh linen was disseminated in the air. All that Piótr Vasílitch could do was to ejaculate "Ah!"—and immediately seize his cap.

Borís Andréitch drew on his left hand a grey glacé-kid glove, having preliminarily blown into it; then with the same hand he nervously poured himself out a quarter of a glass of vodka, and drank it; finally, he took his hat, and went out with Piótr Vasílitch into the anteroom.

"I 'm only doing this for you,"—said Borís Andréitch, as he took his seat in the calash.

"Let us assume that it is for me,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, on whom Borís Andréitch's elegant appearance was, obviously, taking effect;—"but perhaps you will thank me for yourself."

And he told the coachman how and where to drive. The calash rolled off.

"We are going to Sófya Kiríllovna Zadnyéprovsky,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch, after a decidedly prolonged interval, during the course of which both friends had been sitting as motionless as though they were made of stone.—"Have you heard about her?"

"I think I have,"—replied Borís Andréitch.—"And are you reserving her for my bride, pray?"

"And why should n't I? She is a woman of excellent mind, with means, with manners which may be called the manners of the capital. However, you can inspect her . . . . that does not bind you to anything."

"I should think not!"—returned Borís Andréitch.—"And how old is she?"

"Twenty-five or twenty-eight—not more than that. In her very prime, as the saying is!"

It was not fifteen, but a good five-and-twenty versts to Madame Zadnyéprovsky's, so that Borís Andréitch got very thoroughly chilled toward the end, and kept hiding his reddened nose in the

beaver collar of his cloak. Piótr Vasílitch was not afraid of the cold, in general—and, in particular, when he was dressed in festive attire. Then he was, rather, subject to perspiration. Madame Zadnyéprovsky's manor consisted of a small, new, white house, with a green roof, in the style of a suburban villa, in city taste, with a small garden and courtyard. Such villas are frequently to be met with in the environs of Moscow; in the provinces they are more rarely encountered. It was evident that Madame Zadnyéprovsky had not been settled there long. The friends alighted from the calash. On the porch they were received by a footman in yellowish-grey trousers and a round grey frock-coat, the buttons stamped with a coat of arms; in the anteroom, which was quite tidy, but with a locker-bench, another footman of the same sort met them. Piótr Vasílitch ordered the man to announce him and Borís Andréitch. The lackey did not go to his mistress, but replied that he had orders to show them in.

The guests put themselves to rights, and passing through the dining-room, in which a canary-bird was trilling in a deafening manner, they entered the drawing-room, filled with fashionable furniture from a Russian shop, very artful and contorted in shape, under the pretext of insuring the comfort of the persons who should sit upon it, but in reality extremely uncomfortable. Two minutes had not elapsed before the rustle of a

silken gown became audible in the adjoining room; the portière was lifted, and the mistress of the house entered the drawing-room with brisk steps. Piótr Vasílitch bowed and scraped and led Borís Andréitch up to her.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, and have long wished to do so,"—said the hostess easily, as she swept a swift glance over him from head to foot;—"I am very grateful to Piótr Vasílitch for procuring me so agreeable an acquaintance. I beg that you will be seated."

And the hostess seated herself, rustling her gown as she did so, on a low couch, leaned against the back, stretched out her feet, shod in very pretty little boots, and crossed her hands. Her gown was of green glacé silk, with whitish reflections, and had several rows of flounces.

Borís Andréitch seated himself in an arm-chair opposite her; Piótr Vasílitch a little farther away. Conversation began. Borís Andréitch inspected Sófya Kiríllovna with attention. She was a tall, well-built woman, with a slender waist, a dark skin, and quite handsome. The expression of her face, and especially of her eyes, which were large and brilliant, with up-lifted corners, such as the Chinese have, evinced a strange mixture of daring and timidity, and could not possibly be designated as natural. She would narrow her eyes, then suddenly open them very wide; and on her lips there constantly hovered

a smile, which was intended to appear indifferent. All Sófya Kiríllovna's movements were very free, almost abrupt. Nevertheless, her appearance pleased Borís Andréitch; the only thing which affected him unpleasantly was that her hair was parted on one side, which gave to her features a bold, boyish aspect; moreover, she expressed herself too purely and regularly in Russian, in his opinion. . . . Borís Andréitch shared the view of Púshkin, that—

> As rosy lips without a smile,
> So without grammatical errors—

it is impossible to love the Russian language. In a word, Sófya Kiríllovna belonged to the category of women who are called by their admirers "clever ladies," by their husbands "pugnacious persons," and by old bachelors "sprightly females."

The conversation turned first on the tedium of country life.

"There simply is n't a living soul here, simply not a single person with whom to exchange a word,"—said Sófya Kiríllovna, pronouncing the letter *s* with particular distinctness.—"I cannot understand what sort of people it is who live here. And those,"—she added with a grimace,—"with whom one would find acquaintance agreeable, don't come to us; they leave us, poor wretches, in our cheerless solitude."

Borís Andréitch bent forward slightly, and muttered some awkward excuse, while Piótr Vasílitch merely darted a glance at him, as though desirous of saying: "Well, what did I tell you? I don't think the lady stands on ceremony as to her words."

"Do you smoke?"—asked Sófya Kiríllovna.

"Yes . . . . but . . . ."

"Pray, smoke . . . I do it myself."

And so saying, the widow took from the table a fairly large cigar-case, drew from it a cigarette, and offered it to her visitors. Each visitor took a cigarette. Sófya Kiríllovna rang and ordered a small boy with a red waistcoat which covered his entire breast, who entered, to bring a light. The urchin brought a wax taper in a crystal candle-stick. The cigarettes began to emit smoke.

"Here, now, for instance, you would n't believe it,"—pursued the widow, throwing her head back a little, and emitting smoke in a slender stream upward:—"there are people here who think that ladies ought not to smoke. And as for riding on horseback, God forbid! they would simply stone them to death.—Yes,"—she added, after a brief pause,—"everything which stands out above the ordinary level, everything which breaks the law of some fictitious propriety, is subjected here to the severest condemnation."

"The ladies are particularly shrewish in that line,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch.

"Yes,"—responded the widow.—"'T is a calamity for them to get their tongues loosed on you! However, I have nothing whatever to do with them; their gossip does not penetrate into my desert asylum."

"And are you not bored?"—asked Borís Andréitch.

"Bored? No. I read. . . . And when I get tired of books, I meditate; I divine the future, I put questions to my Fate."

"Do you really tell fortunes?"—asked Piótr Vasílitch.

The widow smiled indulgently.

"And why should n't I tell fortunes? I 'm already old enough for that."

"Oh, why do you say that?"—retorted Piótr Vasílitch.

Sófya Kiríllovna gazed at him with her eyes narrowed.

"But let us drop this conversation,"—said she, and turned to Borís Andréitch with vivacity:—"listen, Monsieur Vyazovnín, I am convinced that you are interested in Russian literature."

"Yes . . . . of course, I . . . ."

Vyazovnín was fond of reading, but he read little, and that reluctantly, in Russian. Recent literature, in particular, was unknown to him: he had stopped at Púshkin.

"Tell me, please, why Márlinsky has become so unpopular of late? In my opinion, that is in

the highest degree unjust. What is your opinion of him?"

"Márlinsky is a writer of merit, of course," —replied Borís Andréitch.

"He is a poet; he carries the imagination into a world . . . . into such an enchanting, wonderful world; but nowadays people have begun to describe everyday things. Well, good gracious, what is there good about everyday life here on earth. . . ."

And Sófya Kiríllovna described a circle about her with her hand.

Borís Andréitch looked significantly at Sófya Kiríllovna.

"I do not agree with you. I think there is a great deal of good here,"—he said, laying special emphasis on the last word.

Sófya Kiríllovna suddenly burst out into a harsh sort of laugh, while Piótr Vasílitch as suddenly raised his head, reflected, and set to smoking again. The conversation continued in the same way in which it had begun until dinner-time, skipping incessantly from one subject to another, which does not happen when a conversation becomes really interesting. Among other things, it turned on marriage, on its advantages and disadvantages, and on the position of woman in general. Sófya Kiríllovna stood up strongly against marriage, got excited at last, and feeling conscious of ardour, expressed herself very

eloquently, although her interlocutors hardly contradicted her at all: not without cause did she love Márlinsky. She was also able to resort to ornamentation of the newest style. The words: "artistic," "picturesque," "dependent on," fairly poured from her mouth.

"What can be more precious to a woman than freedom—freedom of thought, of feeling, of action!" she exclaimed at last.

"But permit me,"—Piótr Vasílitch interrupted her; his face had begun to assume a dissatisfied expression;—"what does a woman want with freedom? What will she do with it?"

"What do you mean by 'what'? And is it necessary to man, according to your ideas? That 's it exactly; you, gentlemen . . . ."

"But it is n't necessary to man,"—Piótr Vasílitch interrupted her again.

"What,—it is n't necessary?"

"Yes, precisely that, it is n't necessary. What does a man want of that lauded freedom? When a man is free 't is a well-known fact that he either is bored or he makes a fool of himself."

"Consequently,"—remarked Sófya Kiríllovna, with an ironical smile:—"you are bored; therefore, knowing you to be a sensible man, I cannot assume that you have made a fool of yourself, as you put it."

"Both things happen,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, calmly.

"That 's charming! However, I ought to be grateful to your boredom for giving me the pleasure of seeing you at my house to-day. . . ."

And, pleased with the rather clever turn of her phrase, the hostess threw herself back and articulated in an undertone:

"I perceive that your friend is fond of paradoxes, Mr. Vyazovnín."

"I have not observed it,"—replied Borís Andréitch.

"What is it that I am fond of?"—inquired Piótr Vasílitch.

"Paradoxes."

Piótr Vasílitch looked Sófya Kiríllovna straight in the eye, and made her no reply, but merely thought to himself: "I know what thou art fond of. . . ."

The little boy with the red waistcoat entered and announced that dinner was served.

"Do me the favour,"—said the hostess, rising from the divan.

And they all went into the dining-room.

The guests did not like the dinner. Piótr Vasílitch rose from the table hungry, although there were a great many viands; and Borís Andréitch, as a judge of good eating, was displeased, although the food was served under pewter covers, and the individual plates were served hot. The wine, also, turned out to be bad, in spite of the magnificent labels, adorned with gold and silver,

on the bottles. Sófya Kiríllovna did not cease talking,—only from time to time she darted expressive looks at the servants, and she drank a considerable amount of wine, remarking as she did so, that in England all the ladies take wine, but here it is considered indecorous. After dinner, the hostess invited Borís Andréitch and Piótr Vasílitch to return to the drawing-room, and inquired of them which they preferred—coffee or yellow tea. Borís Andréitch asked for tea, and when he had drained his cup, regretted that he had not taken coffee; while Piótr Vasílitch asked for coffee, and when he had drained his cup, he asked for tea, and having tasted it, he set the cup back on the tray. The hostess seated herself, lighted a cigarette, and evidently was not averse to entering upon the most vivacious conversation; her eyes were blazing, and her swarthy cheeks glowed scarlet. But the guests made languid answers to her bold speeches, occupied themselves chiefly with smoking, and, judging from their glances, which suddenly became riveted on the corners of the room, were thinking of taking their departure. However, Borís Andréitch would, in all probability, have consented to remain until evening; he was already on the point of entering into a debate with Sófya Kiríllovna in answer to her coquettish question: "Was not he surprised at her living alone, without a female companion?" but Piótr Vasílitch was plainly in haste to

go home. He rose, went out into the anteroom, and ordered the horses to be put to. When, at last, the two friends began to take their leave, and the hostess began to try to detain them, and amiably to expostulate with them for having stayed so short a time with her, Borís Andréitch, with an irresolute inclination of his body, and a smirking expression on his face, showed that, at all events, her reproaches were taking effect on him; but Piótr Vasílitch, on the contrary, kept muttering: "Absolutely impossible, ma'am; 't is high time we were going, ma'am—business, ma'am—'t is moonlight now,"—and backed obstinately toward the door. Sófya Kiríllovna made them promise, however, that they would visit her again in a few days, and offered them her hand, in English fashion. Borís Andréitch alone accepted her offer, and squeezed her fingers fairly tight. She screwed up her eyes, and smiled. At that moment, Piótr Vasílitch was already thrusting his arms into his coat-sleeves in the anteroom.

Before the calash had got clear of the village, he was the first to break the silence, with the exclamation:

"She is n't the thing, she is n't the thing—she won't do, she is n't the right thing!"

"What are you trying to say?"—Borís Andréitch asked him.

"She is n't the thing, she is n't the thing,"

—repeated Piótr Vasílitch, averting his eyes, and turning slightly away.

"If you are saying that about Sófya Kiríllovna, I don't agree with you; she is a very charming lady,—with affectations, but charming."

"I should think so! Of course, if only in order, for instance. . . But with what object did I wish to make you acquainted with her, pray?"

Borís Andréitch did not answer.

"I tell you again, she is n't the thing! I see that myself. I like that—the way she speaks of herself: 'I 'm an epicurean.' Excuse me; two of my teeth are missing on the right side—but do I talk about that? Everybody can see it without any words of mine. And, moreover, what sort of a house-wife is she? She has nearly starved us to death. No, in my opinion, be free and easy, be well-read, if the fancy strikes you, be stylish, only be a good house-wife first of all. No, she is n't the thing; she won't do; that 's not the sort of thing you need. You are not to be dazzled with red waistcoats or covers to the dishes."

"But do you find it necessary that I should be dazzled?"—inquired Borís Andréitch.

"I know well what you need,—I know now."

"I assure you, that I am indebted to you for introducing me to Sófya Kiríllovna."

"So much the better; but she won't do, I repeat it."

It was late when the friends reached home. As Piótr Vasílitch parted from Borís Andréitch, he took his hand and said:

"All the same, I won't leave you in peace. I won't give you back your promise."

"Goodness, I am at your service,"—replied Borís Andréitch.

"Well, that 's fine."

And Piótr Vasílitch went his way.

A whole week passed again in the usual routine, with this peculiarity, however, that Piótr Vasílitch absented himself somewhere or other for an entire day. At last, one morning he made his appearance dressed in festal array, and again invited Borís Andréitch to drive with him to make a call. Borís Andréitch, who evidently had been expecting this invitation with a certain amount of impatience, submitted without resistance.

"Whither are you taking me this time?"—he asked Piótr Vasílitch, as he seated himself beside him in the sledge.

Winter had had time to close in since their drive to Sófya Kiríllovna.

"I am taking you now, Borís Andréitch,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch, with pauses between his words,—"to a very honourable house—to the Tikhodúeffs'. It is a highly respected family. The old man served as colonel, and is a very fine

fellow. His wife is a very fine woman. They have two daughters, extremely amiable beings, capitally brought up, and they are wealthy. I don't know which of them you will like best; one of them is vivacious, the other quiet; the second is altogether too shy, I must admit. But both can stand up for themselves. You will see!"

"Good, I shall see,"—replied Borís Andréitch, and thought to himself: "Exactly like the Lárin family in Onyégin."[1]

And whether it was owing to this recollection, or to some other cause, his features assumed for a time a disillusioned and bored aspect.

"What is the father's name?"—he asked carelessly.

"Kalimón Iványitch,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch.

"Kalimón! What a name! . . . And the mother?"

"The mother's name is Pelagéya Ivánovna."

"And what are the daughters called?"

"One is Pelagéya also, and the other is Emeréntziya."

"Emeréntziya? I never heard such a name in my life. . . . And Kalimónovna into the bargain."

"Yes, it really is a rather strange name. . . . But what a girl she is! simply, one may say, all constituted of some sort of virtuous fire!"

[1] Púshkin's famous poem, "Evgény Onyégin."—Translator.

"Good gracious, Piótr Vasílitch, how poetically you express yourself! And which is Emeréntziya—the quieter of the two?"

"No, the other. . . . But you shall see for yourself."

"Emeréntziya Kalimónovna!" exclaimed Vyazovnín again.

"Her mother calls her Emérance,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch, in a low voice.

"And her husband—*Calimon?*"

"I have n't heard her do that. But just wait."

"I will."

It was about twenty-five versts to the Tikhodúeff's', as it was to Sófya Kiríllovna's; but their old-fashioned manor did not in the least resemble the dandified little house of the free and easy widow. It was a clumsy structure, commodious and vast, a sort of mass of dark-hued planks, with dark glass in the windows. By its sides, in two rows, stood lofty birch-trees; the dark-brown crests of huge lindens were visible over the roof—the whole house seemed to be overgrown on all sides; in summer, this vegetation probably enlivened the aspect of the manor, but in winter it imparted to it a still greater air of melancholy. Neither could the impression produced by the interior of the house be called cheerful: everything in it was gloomy and dim, everything seemed older than it really was.

The friends told the servant to announce them;

they were shown into the drawing-room. The master and mistress of the house rose to welcome them, but for a long time could greet them only with signs and movements of the body, to which the guests, on their part, replied merely with smiles and bows: such a frightful barking was set up by four white lap-dogs which, at the appearance of strange faces, leaped from the embroidered cushions, whereon they had been lying. The enraged little dogs were reduced to a degree of silence by the waving of handkerchiefs in the air, and by other means; but one of them, the oldest and the most vicious, had to be dragged from under a bench, and carried off into the bedroom by a maid, who, during the operation, was bitten in the right hand.

Piótr Vasílitch took advantage of the restored silence and introduced Borís Andréitch to the host and hostess. They declared, with one voice, that they were very glad to see the new acquaintance; then Kalimón Ivánitch presented Borís Andréitch to his daughters, calling them Pólinka and Éminka. There were in the drawing-room two other persons of the female sex, who were no longer young; one in a mob-cap, the other with a dark kerchief on her head. But Kalimón Ivánitch did not consider it necessary to introduce Borís Andréitch to them.

Kalimón Ivánitch was a man of fifty-five, tall, stout, grey-haired; his face had no expression

in particular; the features were heavy, plain, with an imprint of indifference, good-nature, and indolence. His wife, a tiny, thin woman, with a worn little face, and a false front of reddish hair under a tall cap, seemed to be in a perennial flutter; traces of a long-vanished affectation were perceptible in her.

Of the daughters, one, Pelagéya, black-haired and swarthy of skin, cast side-long glances and was shy; the other, Emeréntziya, on the contrary, fair-haired, and plump, with round, rosy cheeks, a small pursed-up mouth, a small snub nose, and sweet eyes, stood forth prominently; it was evident that the duty of entertaining guests rested upon her, and did not in the least incommode her. Both sisters wore white gowns, with blue ribbons which fluttered at the slightest movement. Blue was becoming to Emeréntziya, but not to Pólinka . . . and, indeed, it would have been difficult to find anything which was becoming to her, although she could not have been called a homely girl.

The visitors seated themselves; the host and hostess propounded to them the customary questions, uttered with that stiff and mawkish expression of countenance which makes its appearance with the most well-bred people during the first moments of conversation with new acquaintances; the guests expressed themselves in the same manner. All this produced a rather oppressive im-

pression. Kalimón Iványitch, not being very fertile in expedients by nature, asked Borís Andréitch: "was it long since he had come to live in their parts?" while Borís Andréitch had only just finished replying to the self-same question, put by Pelagéya Ivánovna. Pelagéya Ivánovna, in a very tender voice,—the voice which is always used before visitors on the day of their first call,—reproached her husband with being absent-minded; Kalimón Iványitch was somewhat disconcerted, and blew his nose noisily into a checked handkerchief. This sound excited one of the lap-dogs, and it began to bark; but Emerántziya with ready wit immediately petted the dog and soothed it. This same young girl managed to render still another service to her parents, who were still somewhat bewildered: she enlivened the conversation by taking her seat modestly but firmly by the side of Borís Andréitch, and, in her turn, propounding to him, with the most impressive manner, questions which, although insignificant, were agreeable, and calculated to evoke mirthful replies. Matters were soon proceeding as they should; a general debate arose, in which Pólinka alone took no part. She stared obstinately at the floor, while Emeréntziya was even laughing, gracefully raising one hand, and at the same time bearing herself as though she would have liked to say: "Look, look, how well-bred and amiable I am, and how much charming

playfulness and good will to all men there is about me!" It seemed as though her lisp also proceeded from the fact that she was so very good-natured. She laughed, protracting her laughter in a delightful manner, although Borís Andréitch, in the beginning, had not uttered any particularly-amusing remark; then she laughed all the more when Borís Andréitch, stimulated by the success of his words, really did begin to be witty and say malicious things. . . . Piótr Vasílitch laughed also. Vyazovnín remarked, among other things, that he was passionately fond of music.

"But how I do love music, why, it 's simply frightful!"—exclaimed Emeréntziya.

"You not only love it—you are a superb musician yourself,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch.

"Really?"—asked Borís Andréitch.

"Yes,"—continued Piótr Vasílitch:—"and Emeréntziya Kalimónovna and Pelagéya Kalimónovna both sing and play splendidly on the piano, especially Emeréntziya Kalimónovna."

On hearing her name, Pólinka flushed and almost sprang out of her chair, while Emeréntziya modestly dropped her eyes.

"Akh, mesdemoiselles,"—began Borís Andréitch:—"will not you be so kind . . . . will not you do me the favour . . . ."

"I really . . . . don't know. . . ."—lisped

Emeréntziya—and, darting a stealthy glance at Piótr Vasílitch, she added reproachfully:—"Akh, what a man you are!"

But Piótr Vasílitch, being a resolute man, immediately addressed himself to the hostess.

"Pelagéya Ivánovna,"—said he,—"command your daughters to play us something, or to sing."

"I don't know whether they are in good voice to-day,"—replied Pelagéya Ivánovna;—"but they can try."

"Yes, try, do try,"—said their father.

"Akh, *maman,* how can we . . . ."

"*Emérance, quand je vous dis* . . ." said Pelagéya Ivánovna in a low tone, but very seriously.

She had a habit, common to many mothers, of issuing orders, or making hortatory comments to her children, in the presence of other people, in the French language, although those other people understood French also. And this was all the more strange, seeing that she herself did not know that language well, and pronounced it badly.

Emeréntziya rose.

"What shall we sing, *maman?*"—she asked submissively.

"Your duet; it 's very pretty.—My daughters," added Pelagéya Ivánovna, turning to Borís Andréitch,—"have different voices: Emeréntziya has a treble . . . ."

"Soprano, you mean to say?"

"Yes, yes, soprano. And Pólinka has a contralto."

"Ah! a contralto! that 's very pleasant."

"I can't sing to-day,"—said Pólinka, with an effort;—"I am hoarse."

Her voice really resembled a basso more than a contralto.

"Ah! well, in that case, Emérance, sing us thine aria; thou knowest which—the Italian one, thy favourite; and Pólinka will play thine accompaniment."

"The aria where thou patterest, patterest like a shower of peas,"—chimed in her father.

"The one with the bravura,"—explained her mother.

The two girls went to the piano. Pólinka raised the lid, placed the book of manuscript music on the rack, and took her seat, while Emeréntziya stood beside her, bridling almost perceptibly, but very charmingly, beneath the intently riveted glances of Borís Andréitch and Piótr Vasílitch, and occasionally lifting her handkerchief to her lips. At last she began to sing, after the fashion of most young ladies, shrilly and not without howling. She pronounced the words unintelligibly, but from certain nasal sounds it could be divined that she was singing in Italian. Toward the end, she really did patter like peas, to the great satisfaction of Kalimón

Iványitch,—he rose slightly in his chair and exclaimed:—"Well done!"—but she started the final trill sooner than she should have, so that her sister had to play several bars alone. This did not prevent Borís Andréitch, however, from expressing his pleasure, and paying compliments to Emeréntziya; and Piótr Vasílitch, after repeating a couple of times: "Very, very fine," added: "Won't you sing us something Russian now, 'The Nightingale,' or 'The Sarafán,'[1] or some gipsy song? For, to tell the truth, those foreign pieces are not written for such as we."

"I agree with you there,"—remarked Kalimón Iványitch.

"*Chanter . . . 'le Sarafan,'*"—remarked the mother, with the same sternness as before.

"No, not 'The Sarafán,'"—interposed Kalimón Iványitch:—"but 'We are two Gipsies,' or 'Doff thy cap and bow full low'—knowest thou?"

"Papa, you are always so queer!"—replied Emeréntziya, and sang "Doff thy cap," and sang it fairly well. Kalimón Iványitch hummed an accompaniment, and beat time with his foot, while Piótr Vasílitch went into perfect raptures.

"That 's quite another thing! That 's in our style!"—he kept repeating.—"You have

[1] The popular song, "The Red Sarafán"—the sarafán being the full, loose gown of unmarried peasant-girls, gathered into a band under the arms, and suspended over the shoulders by straps.—TRANSLATOR.

comforted us, Emeréntziya Kalimónovna! . . . . Now I see that you had a right to call yourself a lover of music and proficient in it! I agree; you are fond of it and proficient!"

"Akh, how indiscreet you are!"—retorted Emeréntziya, and was on the point of returning to her seat.

"*Á présent 'le Sarafan,'*"—said her mother.

Emeréntziya sang "The Sarafán," not so well as "Doff thy cap," but well, nevertheless.

"Now you ought to play us your sonata for four hands,"—remarked Pelagéya Ivánovna;—"but it will be better to defer that to another time, for I fear that we shall bore Mr. Vyazovnín."

"Pray, don't mention such a thing . . . ." began Borís Andréitch.

But Pólinka immediately clapped to the lid of the piano, and Emeréntziya announced that she was tired. Borís Andréitch felt it incumbent on him to repeat his compliments.

"Akh, Mr. Vyazovnín,"—she replied,—"you must have heard far better singers, I 'm sure; I can imagine what my singing sounds like after them. . . . Bomerius, it is true, said to me when he passed through here . . . . I think you must have heard of Bomerius, have you not?"

"No; who is that Bomerius?"

"Akh, good heavens! a splendid violinist, educated in the Paris Conservatory, a wonderful

musician. . . . He said to me, 'Mademoiselle, with your voice, if you would only study under a good teacher, the result would be simply marvellous.' He simply kissed all my fingers, one after the other. . . . But where am I to study here?"

And Emeréntziya heaved a sigh.

"Yes, of course . . . ." replied Borís Andréitch, politely;—"but with your talent . . ." He hesitated, and turned his eyes aside, with still greater politeness.

"Emérance, demande pourquoi que le dîner . . ." said Pelagéya Ivánovna.

"Oui, maman,"—replied Emeréntziya, and left the room, giving a pretty little skip in front of the door.

She would not have skipped had there not been visitors. And Borís Andréitch walked over to Pólinka.

"If this is the Lárin family,"—he thought,—"must not she be Tatyána?"

And he stepped up to Pólinka, who was watching his movements not without apprehension.

"You played your sister's accompaniments charmingly,"—he began;—"charmingly!"

Pólinka made no reply, but merely blushed to her very ears.

"I am very sorry that I did not succeed in hearing your duet. . . . From what opera is it?"

Pólinka's eyes roved uneasily.

Vyazovnín waited for her answer; no answer came.

"What sort of music do you like best?"—he asked, after waiting a while;—"Italian or German?"

Pólinka dropped her eyes.

"*Pélagie, réponde-donc,*"—resounded Pelagéya Ivánovna's agitated whisper.

"All sorts,"—hastily replied Pólinka.[1]

"But how can you like all sorts best?"—replied Borís Andréitch. "It is difficult to assume that. For instance, there is Beethoven,—a genius of the first magnitude, and yet he is not appreciated by every one."

"No, sir,"—replied Pólinka.

"Art is varied, of course,"—pursued the ruthless Borís Andréitch.

"Yes, sir,"—replied Pólinka.

The conversation between them did not last long.

"No,"—thought Borís Andréitch as he beat a retreat from her,—"she 's no Tatyána! she is simply trepidation personified. . . ."

And poor Pólinka, as she got into bed that night, complained, with tears, to her maid how the visitor that day had worried her about music, and how she had not known what replies to make to him, and how unhappy she was when visitors

[1] Pólinka, or Pauline, is the favourite familiar form of Pelagéya (pronounced Pelagáya); —French Pélagie.—TRANSLATOR.

came: mamma did nothing but scold afterward —and that 's all the satisfaction she got out of it. . . .

At dinner Borís Andréitch sat between Kalimón Iványitch and Emeréntziya. The dinner was Russian, not fanciful, but nutritious, and much better adapted to the taste of Piótr Vasílitch than the artfully-concocted viands of the widow. Beside him sat Pólinka, and, having at last conquered her timidity, she did, at least, answer his questions. On the other hand, Emeréntziya entertained her neighbour so assiduously, that at last it became more than he could bear. She had a habit of bending her head to the right, as she lifted a morsel of food to her mouth on the left —as though she were playing with it; and Borís Andréitch took an intense dislike to this trick. Neither did he like the way she had of talking incessantly about herself, of confiding to him with emotion the most minute details of her life;— but, being a polite man, he did not in the least betray his sentiments, so that Piótr Vasílitch, who was watching him across the table, could not tell what sort of an impression Emeréntziya was making on him.

After dinner Kalimón Iványitch suddenly sank into meditation, or, to speak more plainly, grew slightly drowsy; he was accustomed to take a nap at that hour, and although, on observing that the visitors were preparing to take leave, he re-

marked several times: "But why, gentlemen, why? Won't you play a game of cards?" . . . . yet in his secret soul he was well pleased when he saw that, at last, they had taken their caps in their hands. Pelagéya Ivánovña, on the contrary, immediately grew animated, and tried, with particular insistence, to detain the visitors. Emeréntziya zealously seconded her efforts, and tried in every way to prevail upon them to remain; even Pólinka said to them: *"Mais, Messieurs . . . ."* Piótr Vasílitch replied neither "yes" nor "no," but kept glancing at his companion. Borís Andréitch, on the other hand, courteously but firmly insisted that it was indispensable that they should return home. In a word, matters proceeded as they had at the parting with Sófya Kiríllovna. After having promised to repeat their visit before long, the guests finally departed; Emeréntziya's cordial glances accompanied them clear to the dining-room, while Kalimón Iványitch even went as far as the anteroom and, after watching Borís Andréitch's alert servant wrap up his master in his fur coat, tie a scarf round his neck, and pull his warm boots on his feet, he returned to his study and immediately fell asleep, while Pólinka, who had been reduced to a state of shamed confusion by her mother, went off to her own room up-stairs, and the two speechless female persons, one in a mob-cap and the other with a handkerchief on her head, congratulated Emeréntziya on her new conquest.

The friends drove on in silence. Borís Andréitch smiled to himself, screened as he was from Piótr Vasílitch by the raccoon collar of his fur coat, which was turned up, and waited to hear what he would say.

"Again, she is n't the right thing!"—exclaimed Piótr Vasílitch.

But this time a certain indecision was discernible in his voice, and striving to get a look at Borís Andréitch over the collar of his coat, he added in an inquiring tone:

"That 's true, is n't it—that she is n't the right thing?"

"She is n't,"—replied Borís Andréitch with a laugh.

"So I thought,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch, and after a pause, he added:—"But, after all, why is n't she the right thing? What is it that young girl lacks?"

"She lacks nothing. On the contrary, she has too much of everything. . . ."

"Precisely what do you mean by 'too much'?"

"Why, just that."

"Excuse me, Borís Andréitch, I don't understand you. If you are talking about education, is that any objection? And as for character, behaviour . . . ."

"Ekh, Piótr Vasílitch,"—returned Borís Andréitch:—"I 'm surprised that you, with your clear view of things, do not see through that lisping Emeréntziya! That simulated amiability,

that constant self-adoration, that modest confidence in her own merits, that condescension of an angel gazing down on you from the heights of heaven . . . . but what 's the use of talking! If it comes to that, and in case it is absolutely indispensable, I would twenty times rather marry her sister; she knows how to hold her tongue, at least!"

"You are right, of course,"—replied poor Piótr Vasílitch in a low voice.

Borís Andréitch's sudden sally had dumfounded him.

"No,"—he said to himself, and he said it for the first time since he had made Vyazovnín's acquaintance:—"I 'm no match for him . . . . he 's too learned."

And Vyazovnín on his side was thinking, as he gazed at the moon, which hung low over the white streak of the horizon: "And it really was like a bit out of 'Onyégin': . . .

Round and red of face was she . . . .

—but my Lensky is fine, and I 'm a pretty Onyégin!"

"Faster, drive faster, Láriushka!"—he added aloud.

"She won't do,"—jestingly inquired Borís Andréitch of Piótr Vasílitch, as he alighted from the sledge, with the aid of his footman, and

mounted the porch of his own house,—"hey, Piótr Vasílitch?"

But Piótr Vasílitch made no answer and went off to pass the night at his own house. And Emeréntziya, on the following day, wrote to her friend (she kept up a vast and lively correspondence): "Yesterday we had a new visitor, our neighbour Vyazovnín. He is a very nice, amiable man; it is immediately apparent that he is well-bred, and—shall I whisper a secret in thine ear? —I have an idea that I have made a pretty deep impression on him. But do not worry, *mon amie;* my heart has not been touched, and Valentine has no occasion to feel uneasy."

This Valentine was a teacher in the governmental gymnasium. In town he led a dissipated life, and in the country he sighed for Emeréntziya with platonic and hopeless love.

The friends again met together on the following morning, and their life flowed on as before.

A fortnight elapsed. Borís Andréitch was in daily expectation of an invitation; but Piótr Vasílitch had, apparently, utterly renounced his intentions. Borís Andréitch himself began to talk about the widow and the Tikhodúeffs, and dropped hints to the effect that everything should be subjected to three tests; but Piótr Vasílitch did not even appear to understand his hints. At last Borís Andréitch could endure it no longer, and one day he began thus:

" What 's the meaning of this, Piótr Vasílitch? Evidently, it is now my turn to remind you of your promises."

" What promises? "

" Why, don't you remember, you wanted to get me married? I 'm waiting."

Piótr Vasílitch fidgeted on his chair.

" Why, you 're so fastidious, you know! One can't suit you. God knows what you want! I don't believe there is a bride to your taste in these parts."

" That 's bad, Piótr Vasílitch. You ought not to despair so soon. You have not made a success of the first two trials, but that 's no calamity. Moreover, the widow did please me. If you give me up, I shall betake myself to her."

" All right, go along,—God bless you."

" Piótr Vasílitch, I assure you that, without jesting, I want to get married. Do take me somewhere else."

" Why, really, there is no one else in all the countryside."

" That cannot be, Piótr Vasílitch. Do you mean to say that here, in this whole neighbourhood, there is not a single pretty woman? "

" Of course there is! but they are no mates for you."

" But do name one of them."

Piótr Vasílitch gripped the amber mouthpiece of his tchubúk with his teeth.

"Why, there 's Vyérotchka Barsukóff, for instance,"—he said at last;—"what better do you want? Only, she 's not for you."

"Why?"

"Too simple."

"So much the better, Piótr Vasílitch, so much the better!"

"And her father is such an eccentric."

"That 's no misfortune. . . . Piótr Vasílitch, my friend, do introduce me to that . . . . what the deuce is her name did you say?"

"Barsukóff."

"To Miss Barsukóff . . . . please do. . . ."

And Boris Andréitch gave Piótr Vasílitch no peace until the latter promised to take him to the Barsukóffs'.

Two days later they drove to call on them.

The Barsukóff family consisted of two persons: the father, aged fifty, and the daughter, aged nineteen years. It was not without cause that Piótr Vasílitch had called the father an eccentric; he really was an eccentric of the first water. After completing his course of study in a government institute in brilliant style, he had entered the naval service, and speedily attracted the attention of the superior officers, but had soon retired, married, settled down in the country, and had gradually grown so indolent and so relaxed that, at last, he not only went nowhere—he did not even come out of his room.

Clad in a short coat lined with hare-fur, and in heelless slippers, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his full trousers, he paced back and forth, for days at a time, from one corner to another, now humming a tune, now whistling, and no matter what was said to him, he replied, with a smile, to everything, "Brau, brau!"—that is to say, "Bravo, bravo!"

"Do you know what, Stepán Petróvitch,"—a neighbour who had dropped in to call said to him,—and the neighbours visited him with pleasure, because there was no more hospitable and cordial man in the world than he,—"do you know what? They say that in Byelyóvo the price of grain has risen to thirty rubles in paper money."

"Brau, brau!"—calmly replied Barsukóff, who had just sold his for seven and a half.

"And have you heard that your neighbour, Pável Fómitch, has gambled away thirty thousand at cards?"

"Brau, brau!"—replied Barsukóff, with equal composure.

"The cattle-murrain is in Shlýkovo,"—remarked another neighbour who was sitting by.

"Brau, brau!"

"Lápin's young lady has eloped with the tutor. . . ."

"Brau, brau, brau!"

And so on, without end. He was informed that one of his horses had gone lame, that a Jew

had arrived with his wares, that the clock had fallen off the wall, that a small boy had flung his boots away somewhere—and all that was to be got out of him was: "Brau, brau!" And, nevertheless, no unusual amount of disorder was noticeable in his house: his peasants prospered, and he contracted no debts. Barsukóff's exterior made a favourable impression; his round face, with large brown eyes, a thin, regularly-formed nose, and red lips, surprised one by its almost youthful freshness. This freshness was thrown into all the more striking relief by the snowy whiteness of his hair. A faint smile hovered constantly over his lips, and yet not so much over his lips as over the dimples in his cheeks; he never laughed, but sometimes, very rarely, uttered a hysterical guffaw, and felt ill afterward, on every occasion. He said very little outside of his habitual exclamation, and only the most indispensable things, sticking, moreover, to the utmost possible abbreviations.

His daughter, Vyérotchka, resembled him greatly, both in face and in the expression of her dark eyes, which seemed still darker because of the tender hue of her blond hair, and her smile. She was small of stature, and prettily formed; there was nothing particularly attractive about her, but it was sufficient for one to cast a glance at her, or to hear her voice, to make him say to himself: "That 's a kind-hearted being." The

father and daughter loved each other. The entire management of the housekeeping was in her hands, and she liked to busy herself with it . . . . she knew no other occupations. Not without reason had Piótr Vasílitch called her simple.

When Piótr Vasílitch and Borís Andréitch arrived at Barsukóff's house, he was pacing to and fro in his study, according to his wont. This study, which might also be called the drawing-room and the dining-room, because visitors were received in it, and the table was set in it, took up about one half of Stepán Petróvitch's small house. The furniture in it was ugly but comfortable; a remarkably broad, soft divan, with a great multitude of cushions, stretched the whole length of one wall,—a divan which was well known to all the landed proprietors of the neighbourhood. Truth to tell, it was a very comfortable divan to lie upon. In the remaining rooms there were only chairs, and a few little tables, and cupboards; all these rooms opened into one another, and no one lived in them. Vyérotchka's little bedroom opened on the garden, and in addition to her neat little bed, her wash-stand with mirror attached, and one arm-chair, contained no furniture whatever; to counterbalance this, everywhere in the corners stood bottles filled with fruit-liqueurs, and jars of preserves, all labelled by Vyérotchka's own hand.

On entering the anteroom, Piótr Vasílitch was

on the point of ordering that he and Borís Andréitch should be announced, but a small boy in a long-tailed coat, who happened to be there, merely glanced at him and began to remove his fur coat, with the remark: "Pray, enter, sir." The friends entered Stepán Petróvitch's study. Piótr Vasílitch presented Borís Andréitch to him.

Stepán Petróvitch shook hands with him and said: "I 'm glad . . . . very. You must be chilled through. . . . Vodka?" And indicating with a movement of his head the appetising viands which stood on a small table, he began again to pace the room.

Borís Andréitch drank a glass of vodka, Piótr Vasílitch followed his example, and both seated themselves on the broad divan with its multitude of cushions. Borís Andréitch immediately felt as though he had been sitting all his life on that divan, and had been acquainted with the master of the house for a very long time. That was precisely the feeling which all Barsukóff's visitors experienced.

He was not alone that day; but then, he was rarely to be found alone. Some pettifogger or other was sitting with him, a man with a wrinkled, senile face, a hawk-like nose, and uneasy eyes, a completely threadbare being, who had recently been serving in a warm little post, and at the present moment found himself under indictment. Clutching his stock with one hand, and the front

of his frock-coat with the other, this gentleman was following Stepán Petróvitch with his gaze, and having waited until the visitors had seated themselves, he said with a deep sigh:

"Ekh, Stepán Petróvitch, Stepán Petróvitch! 't is easy to condemn a man; but you know the proverb: 'The honest man 's a sinner, the rascal 's a sinner, all men live by sin, so why should not we also?'"

"Brau . . . ." Stepán Petróvitch was beginning, but stopped short, and said: "'t is a bad proverb."

"Who says it is n't? Of course it 's bad,"—returned the threadbare gentleman;—"but what would you have one do! Misery is more than a match for you, you know: it drives honesty out of you. Here now, I 'm willing to leave it to these nobly-born gentlemen, if they will only deign to listen to the details of my affair. . . ."

"May we smoke?"—Borís Andréitch asked the host.

The host nodded his head.

"Of course,"—pursued the gentleman:—"and perhaps I also have been vexed at myself and at the world in general,—have felt, so to speak, righteous indignation. . . ."

"Invented by scoundrels,"—Stepán Petróvitch interrupted him.

The gentleman gave a start.

"Precisely what do you mean by that, Stepán

Petróvitch? Do you mean to say that righteous indignation was invented by scoundrels?"

Stepán Petróvitch nodded his head again.

The gentleman held his peace for a while, and then suddenly burst into a cracked laugh, which revealed the fact that he had not a single tooth left; yet he spoke quite clearly.

"He, he, Stepán Petróvitch, you are always saying such odd things! Our lawyer says of you, not without reason, that you are a regular punster."

"Brau, brau!"—responded Barsukóff.

At that moment the door opened, and Vyérotchka entered. Advancing with firm, light steps, she bore two cups of coffee and a cream-jug on a green tray. Her simple dark-grey gown fitted her slender form beautifully. Borís Andréitch and Piótr Vasílitch both rose from the divan; she made them a curtsey in response, without letting go of the tray, and stepping up to the table, she deposited her burden on it, with the remark:

"Here is some coffee for you."

"Brau,"—commented her father.—"Two more,"—he added, pointing at the guests.—"Borís Andréitch, my daughter."

Borís Andréitch made her a second obeisance.

"Would you like some coffee?"—she inquired, looking him directly and calmly in the eye.—"It is still an hour and a half to dinner-time."

"With great pleasure,"—replied Borís Andréitch.

Vyérotchka turned to Krupítzyn.

"And you, Piótr Vasílitch?"

"I will drink some also."

"You shall have it directly. I have not seen you for a long time, Piótr Vasílitch."

So saying, Vyérotchka left the room.

Borís Andréitch gazed after her and, bending over to his friend, he whispered in his ear:

"But she is very charming. . . . And what easy manners. . . ."

"Habit,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch:—"they almost keep an eating-house here, you know. When one person goes out of the door, another comes in."

As though in confirmation of Piótr Vasílitch's words, a new visitor entered the room. He was an extremely voluminous man, or, to use an old-fashioned word which still persists in our region, roly-poly, with a big face, big eyes and lips, and tousled hair. An expression of constant dissatisfaction was perceptible on his face—a sour expression. He was dressed in very capacious garments, and lurched from side to side with his whole body as he walked. He dropped heavily on the divan, and only then said: "Good morning," but without addressing himself to any one of those present.

"Vodka?"—Stepán Petróvitch asked him.

"No! vodka forsooth!"—replied the new guest;—"I 'm in no mood for vodka. How are you, Piótr Vasílitch?" he added, glancing round.

"How are you, Mikhéi Mikhéitch,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch.—"Whence has God brought you?"

"Whence? From town, of course. 'T is only you lucky dogs who don't have any occasion to go to town, you know. But I, thanks to Court of Guardianship, and to these little masters here,"—he added, thrusting out his finger in the direction of the gentleman under indictment,—"I have driven all my horses to death running to town. Damn it all!"

"Mikhéi Mikhéitch, my deepest respects to you,"—said the gentleman who had been so unceremoniously designated as little master.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch glanced at him.

"Tell me one thing, please,"—he began, folding his arms:—"when are they finally going to hang thee?"

The other man took offence.

"Well, they ought to do it! By heaven, they ought to! The Government is too lenient to fellows of your stamp—that 's what! I suppose thou art melancholy because thou art under indictment? That 's nothing at all! Only one thing is vexatious, I fancy; thou canst not now—*haben sie gewesen*"—and Mikhéi Mikhéitch stuck out his hand, as though he

were catching something in the air, and then thrust it into his side-pocket.—"Ridiculous! Ekh you, disgusting little race, both big and small!"

"It pleases you always to jest,"—replied the dismissed pettifogger;—"but you will not take into consideration that the giver is free to give, and the receiver to receive. Moreover, I did not act on my own initiative in that case, and more than one person took a hand in it, as I have explained. . . ."

"Of course,"—remarked Mikhéi Mikhéitch ironically. "The fox took refuge under the harrow from the rain—not every drop will land on him anyway. But confess, our chief of police rebuked thee fiercely, did n't he? Hey? 'T was severe, was n't it?"

The man writhed.

"He 's a lively hand at training a man down,"—he said at last, hesitatingly.

"Exactly so!"

"And nevertheless, one may say of him, sir . . . ."

"That he 's a man of gold, a genuine treasure,"—Mikhéi Mikhéitch interrupted him, turning to Stepán Petróvitch.—"He 's a regular giant at handling such fine young fellows as this, and drunkards!"

"Brau, brau!"—responded Stepán Petróvitch.

Vyérotchka entered with two more cups of coffee on a tray.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch made his bow to her.

"One more,"—said her father.

"Why do you give yourself the trouble?"—Borís Andréitch said to her, as he took his cup from her.

"It is no trouble!"—replied Vyérotchka,—"and I do not care to entrust it to the butler; it seems to me that it will be more savoury thus."

"Of course, from your hands."

But Vyérotchka did not listen to his amiable remarks to the end, but went out, returning immediately with coffee for Mikhéi Mikhéitch.

"And have you heard,"—began Mikhéi Mikhéitch, as he drained his cup;—"Márya Ilínitchna is lying speechless, you know."

Stepán Petróvitch halted, and raised his head.

"Certainly, certainly,"—went on Mikhéi Mikhéitch.—"'T is paralysis. You know, of course, how fond she was of eating. So, day before yesterday, she was sitting at table, and she had guests. . . . *Botvínya*[1] was served, and she had

[1] A soup whose foundation consists of a sort of sour small beer, brewed from sour cabbage, or from rye flour (or the crusts of sour rye bread), thickened with strained spinach, tiny cubes of raw cucumber, and minced spring onions. A lump of ice is placed in the tureen. On a separate dish the adjuncts are served, and each person adds them to the above according to his taste. They consist of some sort of cold, boiled fish, cucumbers, onions, horse-radish, crawfish,—anything else which is convenient and savoury,—and sugar. When well made, it is delicious.—Translator.

already eaten two platefuls, and was asking for a third . . . . when all of a sudden she glanced round, and said this way, deliberately, you know: 'Take away the botvínya, all the people are sitting there green' . . . and flop she went off her chair! They rushed to lift her, they asked what ailed her? . . . She explained by motions of her hands, but her tongue was no longer working. They say that our county medical man distinguished himself on that occasion, to boot. . . He sprang to his feet, and shouted: 'The doctor! send for the doctor!'—He lost his head completely. Well, and what practice does he have anyway? He gets his whole living from dead bodies."

"Brau, brau!" articulated Barsukóff, thoughtfully.

"And we are going to have botvínya to-day too,"—remarked Vyérotchka, as she sat down on the edge of a chair in one corner.

"With what? Sturgeon?"—briskly inquired Mikhéi Mikhéitch.

"With fresh sturgeon and dried sturgeon's back."

"That 's fine! Here now, they say that botvínya is not good in winter, because it is a cold dish. That 's nonsense . . . . is n't it, Piótr Vasílitch?"

"Perfect nonsense,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch; —"is n't it pretty warm here indoors?"

"Very warm."

"Then why should n't one eat a cold dish in a hot room? I don't understand."

"And I don't understand."

In this manner did the conversation run on for quite a long time. The host took hardly any part in it, and kept striding about the room. At dinner, all ate with splendid appetite, so exquisitely, though simply, was the food prepared. Vyérotchka sat at the head of the table, served the botvínya, sent the dishes round, watched how the guests ate, and tried to anticipate their wants. Vyazovnín sat beside her and gazed attentively at her. Vyérotchka could not speak without smiling, like her father, and it was very becoming to her. Vyazovnín put a question to her now and then,—not for the purpose of receiving answers from her, but with the express object of seeing that smile.

After dinner, Mikhéi Mikhéitch, Piótr Vasílitch, and the gentleman who was under indictment, whose real name was Onúfry Ílitch, sat down to play cards. Mikhéi Mikhéitch no longer expressed himself so harshly concerning him, although he continued to jeer at him; possibly this arose from the fact that Mikhéi Mikhéitch had drunk a glass too much at dinner. To tell the truth, at every deal he announced in advance that Onúfry would hold all the aces and trumps, that that small fry [1] always stacked the cards to

[1] Literally, "nettle-seed," a term of contempt applied to petty under-clerks.—Translator.

cheat, that he had thievish hands anyway; but, on the other hand, after having made a small slam with him, Mikhéi Mikhéitch began quite unexpectedly to praise him.

"Well, say what thou wilt, thou art utter rubbish,"—he said to him:—"but I love thee, by heaven I do! Because, in the first place, it is my nature to, and in the second place, when one comes to think it over, there are worse folks than thou, and I may even say that thou art a decent man, in thy way."

"You have deigned to speak the truth, Mikhéi Mikhéitch,"—replied Onúfry Ílitch, greatly encouraged by such words:—"the most downright truth; only, of course, if it were n't for persecution . . . ."

"Come, deal, deal,"—Mikhéi Mikhéitch interrupted him;—"persecution, forsooth! What persecution?! Thou mayest thank God that thou art not sitting chained in Pugatchóff's tower at this moment. . . . Deal."

And Onúfry Ílitch began to deal the cards, briskly blinking his little eyes, and still more briskly moistening the thumb of his right hand with his long, thin tongue.

In the meanwhile, Stepán Petróvitch stalked about the room, while Borís Andréitch kept close to Vyéra. The conversation between them proceeded by fits and starts (she was constantly leaving the room), and was so insignificant that

it would be difficult to reproduce it. He questioned her as to what people dwelt in their neighbourhood, whether she often made visits, whether she was fond of housekeeping? To the question, as to what she read, she replied: "I should like to read, but I have no time." And yet, when at nightfall the small boy entered the study with the announcement that their horses were ready, he felt sorry to leave, sorry to cease seeing those kind eyes, that bright smile. If Stepán Petróvitch had taken it into his head to detain him, he certainly would have remained; but Stepán Petróvitch did nothing of the sort, —not because he was not pleased with his new guest, but because this was the established order of things in his house: if any one wished to spend the night, that person himself gave orders straight out that a bed should be prepared for him. Mikhéi Mikhéitch and Onúfry Ílitch did this; they even went to bed in the same chamber, and chatted until long after midnight; their voices were dully audible from the study; Onúfry Ílitch was the principal talker, and appeared to be narrating something, while his interlocutor merely ejaculated from time to time, now with surprise, again with approbation: "H'm!" On the following morning they drove away together to Mikhéi Mikhéitch's village, and thence to the town, still together.

On the way home both Piótr Vasílitch and

Borís Andréitch maintained silence for a long time. Piótr Vasílitch even dozed, lulled by the jingling of the bells, and the smooth motion of the sledge.

"Piótr Vasílitch!"—said Borís Andréitch at last.

"What?"—said Piótr Vasílitch, only half awake.

"Why don't you interrogate me?"

"What should I interrogate you about?"

"Why, as you did those other times—why not?"

"About Vyérotchka, you mean?"

"Yes."

"There you go! As if I destined her for you! She 's not suited to you."

"You 're mistaken in thinking so. She pleases me a great deal more than all your Emerén-tziyas and Sófya Kiríllovnas!"

"You don't mean it?"

"I do, I tell you."

"Why, good gracious!—she 's a perfectly simple young girl. She may be a good house-wife,—that 's a fact; but is that what you require, pray?"

"And why not? Perhaps that is precisely what I am in search of."

"But what are you saying, Borís Andréitch? Good heavens! why, she can't talk French at all!"

"What of that? Can't one get along without the French language?"

Piótr Vasílitch made no reply for a while.

"I did n't in the least expect this . . . . from you, that is to say . . . . it seems to me that you are jesting."

"No, I 'm not jesting."

"God knows what to make of you after this! Why, I thought that she was only a mate for a fellow like me. However, she 's really quite a nice little lass."

And Piótr Vasílitch adjusted his cap, buried his head in a cushion, and went to sleep. Borís Andréitch continued to think of Vyérotchka. He still seemed to see her smile, the merry gentleness of her eyes. The night was bright and cold, the snow gleamed with bluish fires, like diamonds; the stars were shining and the Pleiades were twinkling brilliantly; the frost crackled and creaked under the sledge-runners; the branches of the trees, covered with icy rime, tinkled faintly, as they glistened in the moonlight, as though made of glass. At such times the imagination plays freely. Vyazovnín experienced this in his own case. He thought of all sorts of things, until the sledge drew up, at last, at his porch; but the image of Vyérotchka would not get out of his head, and secretly accompanied his reveries.

Piótr Vasílitch, as we have already said, was

astonished at the impression which Vyérotchka had made on Borís Andréitch; but he was still more astonished when, a couple of days later, that same Borís Andréitch announced to him that he was bent upon driving to see Barsukóff, and that he would go alone if Piótr Vasílitch were not disposed to accompany him. Piótr Vasílitch, of course, replied that he should be delighted, and was ready, and again the friends drove to Barsukóff's house, and again spent the whole day there. As on the first occasion, they found several visitors with him, whom Vyérotchka also regaled with coffee, and after dinner with preserves; but Vyazovnín talked more with her than on the first occasion—that is, he said more to her. He told her about his past life, about Petersburg, about his travels,—in a word, about everything which came into his head. She listened to him with calm interest, smiling every now and then, but not for a single moment forgetting her duties as hostess: she rose on the instant, as soon as she perceived that the guests needed anything, and she herself brought everything to them. When she withdrew, Vyazovnín did not leave his place, and gazed peacefully about him; she returned, seated herself by his side, took up her work, and again he entered into conversation with her. Stepán Petróvitch approached them in the course of his wanderings about the room, listened to Vyazovnín's remarks, muttered:

"brau, brau!"—and so the time fairly flew by. . . . . On this occasion Vyazovnín and Piótr Vasílitch remained over night, and did not depart until the evening of the following day. . . . As he took his leave, Vyazovnín shook Vyéra's hand. She flushed faintly. No man had ever shaken hands with her before that day, but she thought, evidently, this was the established custom in Petersburg.

The two friends began to make frequent visits to Stepán Petróvitch; Borís Andréitch, in particular, made himself quite at home in the house. There were times when he felt irresistibly drawn thither, when he fairly longed to go. Several times he even went alone. Vyérotchka pleased him more and more, and a friendship was established between them, and he was already beginning to think that she was too cold and sensible a friend. Piótr Vasílitch ceased to talk to him about Vyérotchka. . . But lo, one morning, after staring at him, according to his habit, for some time in silence, he said meaningly:

"Borís Andréitch!"

"What?"—returned Borís Andréitch, and flushed slightly, without himself knowing why.

"I want to say something to you, Borís Andréitch. . . . You 'd better look out . . . . you know . . . . 't will be a bad business if, for example, anything . . . ."

"What are you trying to say?"—retorted Borís Andréitch.—"I don't understand you."

"Why, about Vyérotchka. . . ."

"About Vyérotchka?"

And Borís Andréitch blushed worse than before.

"Yes. Look out, for 't is easy to bring about a catastrophe . . . . to insult her, that is . . . . Excuse my frankness; but I consider it my duty as a friend. . . ."

"But what put that into your head, Piótr Vasílitch?"—Borís Andréitch interrupted him.—"Vyérotchka is a girl of the strictest principles, and, in conclusion, there is nothing between us but the most ordinary friendship."

"Come, enough of that, Borís Andréitch!"—interposed Piótr Vasílitch in his turn.—"What sort of friendship can there be between you, a cultured man, and a country girl, who except the four walls of her home . . . ."

"There you go again with the same old cry!"—Borís Andréitch interrupted him again.—"Why you mix culture up in the matter, is more than I can understand."

Borís Andréitch was somewhat angry.

"Come, do listen to me, Borís Andréitch,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, impatiently:—"if it has come to such a pass, I am bound to tell you that you have a perfect right to keep secrets from me, but as for deceiving me, excuse me, but you can-

not do it. For I have eyes as well as you, you see. Yesterday" (they had both been at Stepán Petróvitch's on the day before) "revealed a great deal to me. . . ."

"And what, in particular, did it reveal to you?"—inquired Borís Andréitch.

"Why, it revealed to me the fact that you are in love with her, and jealous of her."

Vyazovnín stared at Piótr Vasílitch.

"Well, and does she love me?"

"That I cannot say for certain; but it would be strange if she did not fall in love with you."

"Because I am well-educated, you mean to say."

"For that reason, and also because you have a fine estate. Well, and your personal appearance might please also. But your property is the principal thing."

Vyazovnín rose and walked to the window.

"How could you notice that I was jealous?"—he asked, suddenly turning toward Piótr Vasílitch.

"Because you were utterly unlike yourself yesterday, until that oaf Karántyeff took his departure."

Vyazovnín made no reply, but he felt in his soul that his friend was speaking the truth. This Karántyeff was a student who had not completed his course, a merry and far from stupid young fellow, with soul, but who had been led utterly

astray and had gone to destruction. Passions had exhausted his powers in early youth; he had been left without guardianship too early. He had an audacious gipsy face, and altogether he resembled a gipsy; he sang and danced like a gipsy. He fell in love with all women. Vyérotchka pleased him greatly. Borís Andréitch made his acquaintance at Barsukóff's, and at first entertained a very friendly feeling toward him; but noticing one day the peculiar expression of countenance wherewith Vyérotchka was listening to his songs, he began to think differently about him.

"Piótr Vasílitch,"—said Borís Andréitch, stepping up to his friend, and coming to a halt in front of him,—"I must confess . . . . that it seems to me you are right. I have felt so this long time, but you have definitively opened my eyes for me. I really am not indifferent to Vyérotchka; but hearken, Piótr Vasílitch, what does that amount to? Neither she nor I desire anything dishonourable; moreover, I have told you, I believe, that I see no particular signs of affection for me on her side."

"All that is so,"—returned Piótr Vasílitch,—"but the Evil One is strong."

Borís Andréitch made no reply for a while.

"What am I to do, Piótr Vasílitch?"

"What? Stop going there."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course. . . . You can't marry her!"

Again Vyazovnín held his peace for a space.

"And why should n't I marry her?"—he exclaimed at last.

"I have already told you why, Borís Andréitch; she 's no mate for you."

"I don't see that."

"If you don't see it, do as you like. I 'm not your guardian."

And Piótr Vasílitch began to stuff his pipe with tobacco.

Borís Andréitch sat down by the window, and became engrossed in meditation.

Piótr Vasílitch did not interfere with him and continued with the utmost composure to emit tiny clouds of smoke from his mouth. At last Borís Andréitch rose, and with visible agitation ordered the horses to be harnessed.

"Whither away?"—Piótr Vasílitch asked him.

"To the Barsukóffs'"—replied Borís Andréitch.

Piótr Vasílitch took five puffs.

"Do you want me to go with you?"

"No, Piótr Vasílitch; I should like to go alone to-day. I want to have an explanation with Vyérotchka."

"As you please."

"There now,"—he said to himself, after he had seen Borís Andréitch off,—"things seem to be coming to a head. . . But he always was a

lucky dog,"—he added, as he stretched himself out on the divan.

On the evening of that same day, as Piótr Vasílitch, without waiting for his friend, was preparing to get into bed in his own house, Borís Andréitch, all powdered with snow, suddenly burst into the room, and flung himself on his neck.

"My friend, Piótr Vasílitch, congratulate me!"—he cried, for the first time addressing him as *thou;*—"she consents, and so does the old man. . . . Everything is already settled!"

"What . . . . do you mean?"—mumbled the astonished Piótr Vasílitch.

"I am going to be married!"

"To Vyérotchka?"

"Yes. . . . Everything is already decided and arranged."

"Can it be?"

"What a man thou art! . . . everything is settled, I tell thee."

Piótr Vasílitch hastily put his slippers on his bare feet, threw on his dressing-gown, and shouted:

"Makedóniya, tea!"—adding:—"Well, if everything is already settled, there 's no use in discussing it; may God grant you concord and counsel! But, tell me, please, how this has come about."

It is worth noting that from that moment the

two friends began to address each other as *thou* just as though they had never done anything else.

"Certainly, with pleasure,"—replied Vyazovnín, and began his narration.

As a matter of fact, this is what had taken place.

When Borís Andréitch had reached Stepán Petróvitch's, the latter had not a single visitor with him, contrary to his custom, and he himself was not stalking about the room, but was sitting in a Voltaire chair: he was not feeling well. He ceased speaking altogether, when he was in that condition, and consequently nodded his head amicably to Vyazovnín as he entered, pointed out to him first the table with the cold luncheon, then Vyérotchka, and closed his eyes. That was all Vyazovnín required; he seated himself beside Vyérotchka, and entered into a low-voiced conversation with her. They discussed the health of Stepán Petróvitch.

"I am always frightened,"—said Vyérotchka, in a whisper,—"when he is ill. He 's so odd, you know; he never complains, he never asks for anything; you can't get a word out of him. If he is ill, he will not say so."

"And do you love him very much?"—Vyazovnín asked her.

"Who? Papa? Yes, more than any one in the

world. God forbid that anything should happen to him! I think I should die!"

"That means that it would be impossible for you to part from him?"

"Part from him? Why should I?"

Borís Andréitch looked her full in the face.

"A young girl cannot live all her life in her father's house."

"Ah! So that is what you mean. . . . Well, I am at ease on that score. . . . Who will take me?"

"I!" Borís Andréitch came near saying, but restrained himself.

"What makes you thoughtful?"—she asked, looking at him with her wonted smile.

"I am thinking,"—he replied,—"I am thinking . . . . that . . . ." And suddenly changing his tone, he asked her whether she had known Karántyeff long.

"Really, I don't remember. . . . So many of them come to see papa, you know. I think he called on us last year for the first time."

"Tell me; do you like him?"

"No,"—replied Vyérotchka, after reflecting a while.

"Why?"

"He is so untidy,"—she replied artlessly.—"He must be a nice man, however, and he sings so splendidly . . . . one's heart stirs within one when he sings."

"Ah!"—articulated Vyazovnín, and after a brief pause, he added:—"But whom do you like?"

"I like a great many people,—I like you."

"You and I are friends, of course. But don't you like some one of the others better?"

"How inquisitive you are!"

"And you are very cold."

"How so?"—asked Vyérotchka, ingenuously.

"Listen . . . ." Vyazovnín was beginning.

But at that moment Stepán Petróvitch turned in his chair.

"Listen,"—he went on, in a barely audible tone, while his blood fairly throbbed in his throat,—"I must say something to you, something very important . . . . only not here."

"Where, then?"

"The next room would do."

"What is it?"—asked Vyérotchka, rising. "A secret, I suppose?"

"Yes, a secret."

"A secret,"—repeated Vyérotchka, with surprise, and went into the adjoining room.

Vyazovnín followed her, as in a fever.

"Well, what is it?"—she asked with curiosity.

Borís Andréitch would have liked to lead up to the point from afar; but when he looked into that young face, animated by that faint smile which he so loved, into those clear eyes, which gazed forth with so gentle a glance, he lost his

head and quite unexpectedly to himself, without any preliminaries, he asked Vyérotchka point-blank:

"Vyéra Stepánovna, will you be my wife?"

"What?"—asked Vyérotchka, flushing all over, so that her very ears were crimson.

"Will you be my wife?"—repeated Vyazovnín, mechanically.

"I . . . . I—really, I don't know—I did not expect . . . . this is so . . . ." whispered Vyéra, putting her hands on the window-sill, to keep from falling,—then she suddenly fled from the room to her own chamber.

Borís Andréitch stood for a while where he was, and then, in great perturbation returned to the study. On the table lay a copy of *The Moscow News*. He picked it up, seated himself, and began to glance over the lines, not only without understanding what was printed there, but even having no conception on the whole as to what had happened to him. He spent about a quarter of an hour in this condition; but then a faint rustle resounded behind him, and without looking around, he felt that Vyéra had entered.

Several more moments passed. He darted an oblique glance from behind the sheet of the *News*. She was sitting by the window, and seemed pale. At last he summoned his courage, rose, went to her, and dropped into a chair by her side. . . .

Stepán Petróvitch did not stir as he sat with head thrown back in his arm-chair.

"Pardon me, Vyéra Stepánovna,"—began Vyazovnín, with a certain amount of effort:—"I am to blame; I ought not to have so suddenly . . . . and yet . . . . I had no reason, of course, to . . . ."

Vyérotchka made him no reply.

"But since it has happened so,"—went on Borís Andréitch,—"I should like to know what answer . . . ."

Vyérotchka softly dropped her eyes; again her cheeks flushed crimson.

"Vyéra Stepánovna, one word."

"I . . . really, I don't know, Borís Andréitch . . . ."—she began,—"that depends on papa. . . ."

"Ill?"—Stepán Petróvitch's voice suddenly rang out.

Vyérotchka started, and hastily raised her head. Stepán Petróvitch's eyes, riveted upon her, expressed uneasiness. She immediately went to him.

"Did you ask me something, papa?"

"Ill?"—he repeated.

"Who? I? No. . . . What makes you think so?"

He gazed intently at her.

"Really well?"—he continued his inquiries.

"Of course; how do you feel?"

"Brau, brau,"—he said quietly, and again closed his eyes.

Vyérotchka was walking toward the door, but Borís Andréitch stopped her.

"Tell me, at least, do you permit me to speak to your father?"

"As you like,"—she whispered:—"only, it seems to me, Borís Andréitch, that I am no mate for you."

Borís Andréitch tried to take her hand, but she evaded him, and left the room. "How strange!" —he thought.—"She says the same thing as Krupítzyn."

When he was left alone with Stepán Petróvitch, Borís Andréitch promised himself that he would explain himself to him in a very judicious manner, and so far as he was able, prepare him for the unexpected proposal; but when it came to action, it proved to be far more difficult even than with Vyérotchka. Stepán Petróvitch was slightly feverish, and being in a condition which was neither exactly meditation nor yet exactly a doze, replied reluctantly and slowly to the various questions and remarks, by means of which Borís Andréitch was hoping gradually to lead up to the real topic of the conversation. . . . In a word, Borís Andréitch, perceiving that all his hints were being wasted, made up his mind, willy-nilly, to come straight to the point.

Several times he inhaled a long breath, as though preparing to speak, then stopped short, without uttering a word.

"Stepán Petróvitch,"—he began at last,—"I intend to make you a proposal which will greatly astonish you."

"Brau, brau,"—said Stepán Petróvitch, calmly.

"A proposal which you are not expecting in the least."

Stepán Petróvitch opened his eyes.

"Only please don't be angry with me. . . ."

Stepán Petróvitch's eyes opened wider than ever.

"I . . . . I intend to ask of you the hand of your daughter, Vyéra Stepánovna."

Stepán Petróvitch rose quickly from his Voltaire chair.

"What?"—he asked, in precisely the same voice, and with precisely the same expression as Vyérotchka.

Borís Andréitch was compelled to repeat his proposal.

Stepán Petróvitch riveted his gaze on Vyazovnín, and stared long and in silence at him, so that, at last, the latter became uncomfortable.

"Does Vyéra know?"—inquired Stepán Petróvitch.

"I have had an explanation with Vyéra Stepánovna, and she has given me permission to address myself to you."

"Have you just had the explanation with her?"

"Yes, a little while ago."

"Wait,"—said Stepán Petróvitch, and left the room.

Borís Andréitch was left alone in the eccentric's study. He was staring, in a numb sort of way, now at the walls, now at the floor, when suddenly the trampling of hoofs rang out at the porch, the door of the anteroom banged, and a thick voice inquired: "At home?" Steps became audible, and Mikhéi Mikhéitch, with whom we are already acquainted, burst into the room.

Borís Andréitch was ready to swoon with vexation.

"Whew, how hot it is here!"—exclaimed Mikhéi Mikhéitch, as he dropped down on the divan. —"Ah, good morning! And where is Stepán Petróvitch?"

"He has gone out; he will be back directly."

"It 's frightfully cold to-day,"—remarked Mikhéi Mikhéitch, pouring himself out a glass of vodka.

And almost before he had fairly swallowed it, he said vivaciously:

"I come from town again, you know."

"From town?"—returned Vyazovnín, with difficulty concealing his confusion.

"Yes, from town,"—repeated Mikhéi Mikhéitch;—"and all thanks to that brigand Onúfry.

Just imagine, he told me such a damned pack of lies, he set such dastardly wheels in motion, that áï-lullaby, my joy! 'I 've found such an affair for you,' says he, 'the like of which has never before existed in the world; simply—all you have to do is to rake in the rubles.' And the affair ended by his borrowing twenty-five rubles from me, and I dragged myself to town in vain, and have utterly exhausted my horses."

"You don't say so!"—muttered Vyazovnín.

"I tell you, he 's a brigand, a brigand, if ever there was one. All he has to do is to take to the road with an iron ball hitched to a strap. Really, I don't understand what the police are about. Why, one would be reduced to beggary by him if one went on in that way, by God!"

Stepán Petróvitch entered the room.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch began to narrate to him his adventures with Onúfry.

"And why does n't somebody wring his neck?"—he exclaimed.

"Wring his neck,"—repeated Stepán Petróvitch, and suddenly began to roar with laughter.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch also began to laugh, as he looked at him, and even repeated: "Exactly; he ought to have his neck wrung." But when Stepán Petróvitch fell back, at last, on the divan, in convulsions of hysterical laughter, Mikhéi Mikhéitch turned to Borís Andréitch and said, throwing his hands somewhat apart:

"He 's always like that: he 'll suddenly take to laughing,—the Lord only knows at what. He has so much arrogance!"

Vyérotchka entered, all agitated, with reddened eyes.

"Papa is not quite well to-day,"—she remarked, in an undertone to Mikhéi Mikhéitch.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch nodded, and thrust a bit of cheese into his mouth. At last Stepán Petróvitch stopped, rose, sighed, and began to pace the room. Borís Andréitch avoided his glances, and sat as though on pins and needles. Mikhéi Mikhéitch began again to abuse Onúfry Ílitch.

They sat down to dinner; at table also, no one spoke but Mikhéi Mikhéitch. At last, as evening was drawing on, Stepán Petróvitch took Borís Andréitch's arm, and silently led him into the next room.

"Are you a good man?"—he asked, looking him in the face.

"I am an honest man, Stepán Petróvitch,"—replied Borís Andréitch:—"I can guarantee that,—and I love your daughter."

"You love her? Truly?"

"I do, and I shall endeavour to win her love."

"You will not get tired of her?" Stepán Petróvitch put another question.

"Never!"

Stepán Petróvitch's face contracted with pain.

" Well, see that you don't. . . . You love her . . . . I consent."

Borís Andréitch tried to embrace him, but he said:

" Afterward . . . . good."

And wheeling round, he went to the wall. Borís Andréitch could see that he was weeping.

Stepán Petróvitch wiped his eyes without turning round, then went back to the study, passing Borís Andréitch, and, without looking at him, he said with his habitual smile:

" That will do for to-day, if you please . . . . to-morrow . . . . everything . . . . that is necessary . . . ."

" Very well, very well," hastily replied Borís Andréitch, and entering the study in his wake, he exchanged a glance with Vyérotchka.

He felt joyful in soul, yet embarrassed at the same time. He could not remain long at Stepán Petróvitch's in company with Mikhéi Mikhéitch; he felt the imperative necessity of being alone,—and, moreover, he longed to see Piótr Vasílitch. He departed, promising to return the next day. As he took leave of Vyérotchka in the anteroom, he kissed her hand; she gazed at him.

" Until to-morrow,"—he said to her.

" Farewell,"—she replied, softly.

" So there, you see, Piótr Vasílitch,"—said Borís Andréitch, as he concluded his recital, and

strode to and fro in his bedroom,—"something has occurred to me. Why does it frequently happen that a young man does not marry? Because it seems to him a terrible thing to enslave his life; he thinks: 'What 's the hurry? There 's plenty of time; perhaps I 'll wait for a better chance.' And he ends, generally, by becoming a grumpy old bachelor, or he marries the first woman he hits upon; all that is selfishness and pride. I shall never find a better wife for myself than Vyérotchka; and if she is somewhat lacking from the side of education, I shall make it my business to attend to that. She has quite a phlegmatic disposition, but that 's no misfortune—quite the contrary! That is why I made up my mind so quickly. And thou didst advise me to marry. But if I have made a mistake,"—he added, then paused, and after brief reflection, went on:—"there 's no great harm done! My life would not have amounted to anything as it is!"

Piótr Vasílitch listened in silence to his friend, now and then sipping from a cracked glass the very bad tea prepared by the zealous Makedóniya.

"Why dost thou not say something?"—Borís Andréitch asked him at last, coming to a halt in front of him.—"I certainly am talking practically, am I not? Thou agreest with me, dost thou not?"

"The proposal has been made,"—replied

Piótr Vasílitch, pausing between his words:—"the father has given his blessing, the daughter has not refused, consequently, further discussion is useless. Perhaps everything really is for the best. We must think of the wedding now, and not argue; but the morning is wiser than the evening. . . . We will talk things over in proper style to-morrow.—Hey! Who 's there? escort Borís Andréitch."

"But do embrace me; at least, congratulate me,"—replied Borís Andréitch. "What a fellow thou art, really!"

"As for embracing, I 'll embrace thee with pleasure."

And Piótr Vasílitch embraced Borís Andréitch.

"May God give thee every good thing on this earth!"

The friends parted.

"'T is all because,"—said Piótr Vasílitch aloud to himself, as he turned on his other side, after having lain for some time in bed,—"'t is all because he has not been in the military service! He has got into the habit of being capricious, and does n't know the regulations."

A MONTH later, Vyazovnín married Vyérotchka. He himself had urgently requested that the wedding should not be delayed. Piótr Vasílitch acted as his best man. Vyazovnín drove to Stepán Pe-

tróvitch's every day during that month; but no change was observable in his demeanour to Vyérotchka, or in hers to him: she had become more shy with him—that was all. He brought her "Yury Miloslávsky," and himself read aloud to her several chapters. Zagóskin's [1] romance pleased her; but when she had finished it, she did not ask for another. Karántyeff came once to take a look at Vyérotchka, who had become the betrothed of another man, and it must be admitted that he came in a state of intoxication, stared at her uninterruptedly, as though preparing to say something, but said nothing; he was asked to sing, and started up some mournful ditty or other, then began a dashing lay, flung his guitar on the divan, bade every one farewell, and on taking his seat in his sledge, fell prone on the hay with which the bottom was spread, and began to sob—and a quarter of an hour later was plunged in drunken slumber.

Vyérotchka was very sad on the eve of the wedding, and Stepán Petróvitch also was depressed. He had hoped that Borís Andréitch would consent to remove to his house for permanent residence; but he said not a word about this and, on the contrary, Borís Andréitch proposed to Stepán Petróvitch that he should settle down at Vyázovna for a while. The old man declined; he was

[1] Mikhaíl Vasílievitch Zagóskin, a writer in the thirties of the nineteenth century.—Translator.

accustomed to his study. Vyérotchka promised to visit him once a week at least. How dejectedly did her father answer: "Brau, brau!"

So, then, Borís Andréitch began his life as a married man. At first everything went finely. Vyérotchka, being a capital housewife, established order in his house. He admired her noiseless but solicitous activity, her perennially bright and gentle temper, he called her "his little Dutch woman," and kept incessantly repeating to Piótr Vasílitch that he now knew, for the first time, what happiness was. It must be noted, that Piótr Vasílitch, from the day of the wedding, ceased to come to him so frequently as before, and did not sit so long with him, although Borís Andréitch, as of yore, received him with great cordiality, and Vyérotchka was sincerely attached to him.

"Thy life is no longer what it was,"—he said to Vyazovnín, when the latter affectionately accused him of having grown cold toward him:—"thou art a married man, I am a bachelor. I might be in the way."

At first Vyazovnín did not contradict him; but before long, he gradually began to perceive that he was bored at home without Krupítzyn. His wife was not at all in his way; on the contrary, he sometimes quite forgot her existence, and for whole mornings in succession he did not say a word to her, although he always gazed with satisfaction and tenderness in her face; and every

time that she walked past him with her light step, he caught her hand and kissed it, which invariably evoked a smile on her lips. The smile was the one which he so loved; but enough concerning that smile.

There was too little in common between them, and he began to divine this.

"Well, there 's no denying that my wife has very few resources,"—thought Borís Andréitch one day, as he sat, with folded arms, on the divan.

Vyérotchka's words, which she had said to him on the day he made his proposal,—"I am not a mate for you,"—began to resound in his soul.

"If I were some German or learned man,"—he pursued his meditations,—"or if I had any steady occupation which engrossed the greater part of my time, such a wife would be a treasure; but as it is! Can it be that I have made a mistake?" . . . . This last thought was more torturing to him than he had anticipated.

When, that same morning, Piótr Vasílitch repeated to him once more that he would not disturb them, he was in no condition to contain himself, and blurted out:

"Good gracious! thou dost not disturb us in the least; on the contrary, it is much jollier for us when thou art present . . . ." He came near saying "much more comfortable."—And it was really so.

Borís Andréitch gladly chatted with Piótr

Vasílitch in exactly the same manner as he had before his marriage; and Vyérotchka knew how to talk to him, but she stood too greatly in awe of her husband, and with all her indubitable affection for him she did not know what to say to him, how to entertain him. . . .

In addition to this, she saw that the presence of Piótr Vasílitch made him animated. The end of it all was, that Piótr Vasílitch became an absolutely indispensable person in Borís Andréitch's house. He became as fond of Vyérotchka as of a daughter; and it was impossible not to love so amiable a being. When Borís Andréitch, thanks to human weakness, confided to him his most intimate thoughts and complaints, Piótr Vasílitch vigorously reproved him for his ingratitude, enumerated to him all Vyérotchka's merits, and one day, in reply to a remark of Borís Andréitch, to the effect that he, Piótr Vasílitch, himself had certainly thought them unsuited to each other, he answered him angrily that he was not worthy of her.

"I have found nothing in her,"—muttered Borís Andréitch.

"What dost thou mean by that? Why, didst thou expect anything remarkable from her? Thou hast found a splendid wife in her. That 's what!"

"That is true,"—hastily replied Vyazovnín.

In Vyazovnín's house, everything went on as

before—peaceably and quietly, because there was no possibility of quarrelling with Vyérotchka—not even a misunderstanding could exist between her and her husband; but the internal rupture could be detected in everything. Thus is the influence of an invisible internal wound perceptible in a man's whole being. Vyérotchka was not in the habit of complaining; moreover, she did not, even mentally, blame Vyazovnín for anything, and it never once entered his head that she did not find it altogether easy to live with him. Two persons only understood her position: her old father and Piótr Vasílitch. Stepán Petróvitch petted her, and gazed into her eyes with a certain compassion when she went to see him,—he did not question her about anything, but he sighed more frequently as he paced his room, and his "brau, brau!" no longer had, as before, the ring of unperturbed peace of a soul which has withdrawn from all that is earthly. Separated from his daughter, he seemed to have grown paler and thinner.

Neither was what was going on in her soul a secret to Piótr Vasílitch. Vyérotchka did not in the least demand that her husband should occupy himself with her, or even chat with her; but the thought that she was a burden to him pained her. One day, Piótr Vasílitch found her standing motionless with her face to the wall. Like her father, whom she resembled in an extraor-

dinary degree, she did not like to display her tears, and turned away when she wept, even if she was alone in the room. . . . Piótr Vasílitch walked softly past her, and afterward did not allow her to suspect, from the slightest hint, that he understood why she had been standing with her face to the wall. On the other hand, he gave Vyazovnín no peace. Not once, it is true, did he utter in his presence those insultingly-irritating, useless, and conceited words: "I told thee beforehand exactly how it would be!"—those words which, we may remark in passing, the very best of people are unable to refrain from uttering in moments of the most fervent sympathy; but he pitilessly attacked Borís Andréitch for his indifference and spleen, and once worked him into such a state that he ran to Vyérotchka, and began uneasily to scrutinise and interrogate her. She looked at him so gently and answered him so calmly, that he went away, inwardly perturbed by Piótr Vasílitch's reproaches, but content that Vyérotchka, at least, suspected nothing. . . . So passed the winter.

Such relations cannot last long: they either end in a rupture, or undergo a change which is rarely for the better. . . .

Borís Andréitch did not become irritable and exacting, as often happens with people who feel conscious that they are in the wrong, neither did he permit himself the cheap satisfaction in which

even clever persons frequently indulge, of jeering and ridicule, and he did not sink into melancholy; he simply began to be preoccupied by the thought, how he might get away from the place, —for a time, of course.

"Travel!" he kept repeating to himself when he rose in the morning. "Travel!" he whispered as he went to bed: in that word there lay hidden seductive enchantment for him. He made an attempt to frequent the society of Sófya Kiríllovna, for diversion, but her loquacity and her freedom of manner, her smiles and grimaces, seemed extremely mawkish to him. "She 's not to be compared with Vyérotchka!"—he thought, as he gazed at the showily-attired widow, and yet the idea of getting away from that same Vyérotchka never left him. . . .

The breath of approaching spring,—that spring which draws and entices even the birds from beyond the sea,—dissipated his last misgivings, turned his head. He went off to Petersburg, on the pretext of some weighty business that could not be postponed, which up to that time had never so much as been mentioned. . . . As he took leave of Vyérotchka, he suddenly felt his heart contract and bleed; he felt sorry for his kind, quiet wife. Tears gushed from his eyes, and bedewed her white brow, which he had just touched with his lips. . . . "I shall return soon, very soon, and I will write, my darling!"—he

said over and over again,—and committing her to the attention and friendship of Piótr Vasílitch, he seated himself in his calash, profoundly moved and sad. . . . His sadness vanished instantly at the sight of the first tenderly-green willows on the highway, which ran two versts distant from his village; an incomprehensible, almost youthful rapture set his heart to beating hard; his breast heaved, and he eagerly riveted his eyes on the far distance.

"No!"—he exclaimed;—"I see that—

> To the same cart one must not hitch
> A war-horse and a timorous doe. . . ."

But what sort of a war-horse was he?

Vyéra was left alone; but, in the first place, Piótr Vasílitch called upon her frequently, and, best of all, her old father made up his mind to tear himself from his beloved abode, and removed for a time to his daughter's house. And those three began to live gloriously together. Their tastes, their habits, coincided! And yet, Vyazovnín not only was not forgotten by them, —quite the contrary, he served them all as an invisible bond of union; they talked incessantly about him, about his cleverness, his kindness, about the good-breeding and simplicity of his manners. It was as though they had come to be fonder than ever of Borís Andréitch during his

absence from home. Splendid weather set in; the days did not fly, no, they passed peacefully and cheerfully, like the bright, high-hanging clouds in the clear blue sky. Vyazovnín wrote rarely; his letters were read and re-read with great satisfaction. In each of them he spoke of his speedy return. . . . At last, one day, Piótr Vasílitch received from him the following epistle:

Dear Friend, my very kind Piótr Vasílitch! I have meditated long how to begin this letter; but, obviously, the best way will be to tell thee point-blank that I am going abroad. This news will, I know, surprise thee and even anger thee: thou couldst not possibly have expected it,—and thou wilt be doing quite right if thou callest me a light-minded and dissipated man; and I have not the slightest intention of justifying myself, and even at this moment I feel myself blushing. But listen to what I have to say with some lenience. In the first place, I am going for a very short time only, and in such company and on such advantageous terms as thou canst not possibly imagine to thyself; and, in the second place, I am firmly convinced that, after having played the fool for the last time, for the last time satisfied my passion to see and experience everything, I shall become a capital husband, family man, and stay-at-home, and shall prove that I know how to value the undeserved favour which Fate has done me in conferring upon me such a wife as Vyérotchka. Please convince her of this, and show her this letter. I shall not write to her now myself: I have not the spirit for that,—but I shall write without fail from Stettin, to which port the steamer

is bound; and in the meantime, tell her that I am kneeling before her, and humbly entreating her not to grieve for her stupid husband. Knowing her angelic disposition, I am persuaded that she will forgive me; and I swear by everything in the world that three months hence, not later, I will return to Vyázovna, and then you won't be able to get me away from there by force to the end of my days. Farewell, or rather—good-bye for a short time; I embrace thee and kiss my Vyérotchka's charming hands. I will write to thee from Stettin, where letters are to be addressed to me. In case of any unforeseen business, and in regard to the management of the estate in general, I depend upon thee, as upon a stone wall. Thy

Borís Vyazovnín.

P. S. Order my study to be papered in the autumn . . . . without fail . . . . dost hear me?

Alas! The hopes expressed by Borís Andréitch in this letter were not destined to fulfilment. Owing to a multitude of cares and new impressions, he did not find time to write from Stettin to Vyérotchka; but from Hamburg he sent her a letter, in which he informed her of his intention to visit Paris,—for the purpose of inspecting several industrial establishments, and also for the purpose of attending certain necessary lectures,—and requested her to address his letters there, *poste restante,* for the future.

Vyazovnín reached Paris in the morning, and,

having in the course of the day made the round of the boulevards, the garden of the Tuilleries, the Place de la Concorde, the Palais Royal, and having even ascended the Colonne Vendôme, he dined solidly, and with the air of a habitué at Véfour's, and in the evening betook himself to the Château-des-Fleurs—to find out, in the capacity of spectator, what the "cancan" really was, and how the Parisians execute that dance. The dance itself did not please Vyazovnín; but one of the Parisiennes, who had executed the cancan, a lively, slender brunette with a snub-nose and bold eyes, did please him. He began to stop beside her more and more frequently, first exchanging glances with her, then smiles, then words. . . . Half an hour later, she was walking arm in arm with him, had told him *son petit nom,—Julie,—* and had hinted that she was hungry, and that nothing could be better than a supper *à la Maison d'Or, dans un petit cabinet particulier.* Borís Andréitch himself was not hungry in the least, and, moreover, supper in the company of Mademoiselle Julie had not entered into his calculations. . . . "But, if that is the custom here,"—he thought,—"I must go. *Partons!*"—he said aloud,—but at that moment, some one trod on his foot in a very painful manner. He cried out, turned round, and beheld before him a middle-aged gentleman, very thick-set and broad-shouldered, in a tight stock, and a civilian's coat but-

toned to the throat, and full trousers of military cut. With his hat pulled down on his very nose, from beneath which his dyed moustache hung down in two little cascades, and with the pockets of his trousers outspread by the thumbs of his hairy hands, this gentleman,—an infantry officer, by all the tokens—had riveted his eyes straight on Vyazovnín's face. The expression of his yellow eyes, of his rough, flat cheeks, of his bluish, protruding cheek-bones, of his whole countenance, was churlish and insolent.

"Was it *you* who trod on my foot?"—said Vyazovnín.

"*Oui, monsieur. . .*"

"But in such cases . . . . people beg pardon."

"And what if I don't choose to beg your pardon, *monsieur le Moscovite?*"

Parisians instantly recognise Russians.

"That means that you intended to insult me?" —inquired Vyazovnín.

"*Oui, monsieur;* I don't like the shape of your nose."

"*Fi, le gros jaloux!*"—whispered Mademoiselle Julie, to whom, apparently, the infantry officer was not a stranger. . . .

"But in that case . . . ." began Vyazovnín, as though perplexed. . . .

"You mean to say,"—interposed the officer: —" in that case, we must fight. Of course. Very good, sir. Here is my card."

"And here is mine,"—replied Vyazovnín,—and without ceasing to wonder, and as though asleep, with a confused beating of the heart, he scribbled on the shining paper of his visiting-card, with a gold pencil which he had just purchased as a trinket for his watch-chain, the words: "Hôtel des Trois Monarques, No. 46."

The officer nodded, remarked that he "would have the honour of sending his seconds to M-r. . . . M-r." . . . (he raised Vyazovnín's card to his right eye), "to M-r. de Vazavononin"—and turned his back on Borís Andréitch, who immediately quitted the Château-des-Fleurs. Mademoiselle Julie attempted to detain him,—but he looked very coldly on her. . . . She slowly turned away from him, and for a long time thereafter, sitting down apart, she was engaged in explaining something to the angry officer, who, as before, did not remove his hands from his trousers, kept twitching his moustache, and did not smile. . . .

On emerging into the street, Vyazovnín read the card which had been handed to him for the second time, and with great attention, under the first gas-lamp he came to. On it stood the following words: "*Alexandre Lebœuf, capitaine en second au 83-me de ligne.*"

"Can it be possible that this will have any consequences?"—he thought, as he wended his way back to his hotel. "Can it be possible that I shall really fight! And for what? and on the very day

after my arrival in Paris! How stupid!"—He began letters to Vyérotchka and to Piótr Vasílitch,—and immediately tore up and threw away the letters thus begun. "Nonsense! a mere comedy!"—he repeated, and lay down to sleep.—But his thoughts took another turn when, on the following morning, at breakfast, two gentlemen presented themselves to him, who bore a strong resemblance to M. Lebœuf, only somewhat younger (all French infantry officers have one and the same cast of countenance), and, announcing their names (one was M-r. Lecocq, the other M-r. Pinochet—and both served as lieutenants "*au 83-me de ligne*), introduced themselves to Borís Andréitch in the capacity of seconds "*de notre ami, M-r. Lebœuf,*" sent by him for the purpose of taking the requisite measures, as their friend, M-r. Lebœuf, could not accept any excuses. Vyazovnín was compelled, on his side, to inform the officers, the friends of M-r. Lebœuf, that, being a newcomer in Paris, he had not yet had time to look about him, and provide himself with seconds . . . ("One is sufficient, is it not?"—he added.—"Entirely sufficient," replied M-r. Pinochet), and therefore he must request the officers to grant him four hours' grace. The officers exchanged glances, shrugged their shoulders, but consented, and rose from their seats.

"*Si monsieur le désire,*"—suddenly remarked M-r. Pinochet, stopping short at the door (of the

two seconds he was, evidently, the more ready of speech, and had been commissioned to do the talking—M-r. Lecocq only grunted approvingly).—"*Si monsieur le désire,*"—he repeated (at this point, Vyazovnín recalled M'sieu Galassi, his Moscow hairdresser, who frequently employed that phrase):—"we can recommend one of the officers of our regiment, *le lieutenant Barbichon, un garçon très dévoué,* who will certainly consent to render '*à un gentleman*'" (M-r. Pinochet pronounced this word in French fashion: *zhantleman*)—"the service of extricating him from a dilemma, and, on becoming your second, will take your interests to heart—*prendra à cœur vos intérêts.*"

Vyazovnín was astonished, at first, by such a proposition, but, on reflecting that he had no acquaintances in Paris, he thanked M-r. Pinochet, and said that he would expect M-r. Barbichon.—And M-r. Barbichon made no delay in presenting himself. This *garçon très dévoué* proved to be an extremely alert and active individual. Declaring that "*cet animal de Lebœuf n'en fait jamais d'autres . . . c'est un Othello, monsieur, un véritable Othello*"—he asked Vyazovnín: "*N'est ce pas, vous désirez que l'affaire soit sérieuse?*" and without waiting for an answer, exclaimed, "*C'est tout ce que je désirais savoir! Laissez-moi faire!*"—And, in fact, he conducted the affair in such brisk fashion, he took Vyazov-

nín's interests so warmly to heart that, four hours later, poor Borís Andréitch, who had never known how to fence in his life, was standing in the very centre of a small glade in the Bois de Vincennes, sword in hand, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, and without his coat, two paces distant from his antagonist, who was similarly disrobed. The scene was illuminated by brilliant sunlight. Vyazovnín was utterly unable to explain clearly to himself how he had got there; he continued to repeat to himself: "How stupid this is! how stupid this is!" and he felt conscience-stricken,—as though he were taking part in some vulgar prank,—and an awkward smile, concealed within, never quitted his soul, while his eyes could not tear themselves away from the low forehead, and the closely-clipped black hair of the Frenchman who towered aloft before him.

"*Tout est prêt!*"—rang out a lisping voice. "*Allez!*"—squeaked another voice.

M-r. Lebœuf's face assumed an expression which was not so much malicious as rapacious. Vyazovnín flourished his sword. . . (Pinochet had assured him that ignorance of the art of fencing gave him great advantages: "*de grands avantages!*") . . . then something remarkable suddenly came to pass. Something clashed, stamped, glittered—Vyazovnín felt in the right side of his breast the presence of some sort of a long cold stick. . . . He tried to push it away,

to say: "I don't want it!" but he was already lying on his back and experiencing a strange, almost absurd sensation: as though they were trying to extract teeth all over his body. . . . Then the earth softly slipped away from under him. . . The first voice said: "*Tout s'est passé dans les règles, n'est ce pas, messieurs?*"—The second voice answered: "*O, parfaitement!*" And bang! everything round about flew away, and sank away. . . . "Vyérotchka!" Vyazovnín had barely managed to think dimly.

Toward evening, "the devoted young fellow" carried him to the Hôtel des Trois Monarques—and during the night he expired. Vyazovnín had set out for that bourne whence no traveller has ever returned. He did not recover his consciousness before death, and only stammered a couple of times: "I shall return directly . . . . this is nothing . . . . now to the country. . . ." The Russian priest, for whom the landlord sent, reported the whole affair to our Embassy—and "the unfortunate affair with the Russian traveller"—got into all the newspapers in a couple of days.

Painful and bitter was it for Piótr Vasílitch to communicate to Vyérotchka her husband's letter; but when the news of Vyazovnín's death reached him, he lost his head completely. The first person to read about it in the newspapers was Mi-

khéi Mikhéitch, and he immediately galloped off to Piótr Vasílitch, in company with Onúfry Ílitch, with whom he had succeeded in making up. As was to have been expected, he began to shout while he was still in the anteroom: "Just fancy, what a calamity!" and so forth. Piótr Vasílitch would not believe him for a long time; but when doubt was no longer possible, he betook himself to Vyérotchka, after waiting a whole day. His mere aspect—crushed, annihilated—alarmed her to such a degree that she could hardly stand upright. He tried to prepare her for the fatal news, but his strength failed him—he sat down, and stammered through his tears:

"He is dead, dead. . . ."

A YEAR passed. Fresh sprouts spring from the stump of the felled tree; even the deepest wound heals over; life also replaces death, just as it is replaced by it,—and Vyérotchka's heart was somewhat rested and had recovered life.

Moreover, Vyazovnín did not belong to the category of those people who cannot be replaced (and are there any such people?)—neither was Vyérotchka capable of devoting herself forever to feelings (are there any such feelings?). She had married Vyazovnín without compulsion and without enthusiasm; she had been faithful and de-

voted to him; but she had not surrendered herself wholly to him; she mourned him sincerely, but not madly . . . . what more could be required? Piótr Vasílitch did not cease to visit her; as of yore, he was her closest friend, and therefore it is not in the least surprising that, on being left alone with her one day, he looked into her face and very calmly proposed that she should become his wife. . . . She smiled in reply, and gave him her hand. Their life after the wedding flowed on precisely as before: there was no necessity for making any change.

About ten years have elapsed since that time. Old Barsukóff lives with them, and as he never goes a step away from his grandchildren,—he has three already, two little girls and one boy,—he grows younger every year. He even talks with them, especially with his pet grandson, a curly-haired, black-eyed urchin, named Stepán in honour of him. The little rogue is perfectly well aware that his grandfather adores him, and, in consequence of this, he permits himself to mimic his way of walking about the room and exclaiming: "Brau, brau!" This prank always creates great mirth in the whole household.

Poor Vyazovnín is not forgotten to this day. Piótr Vasílitch reveres his memory, always refers to him with special emotion, and on every convenient occasion never fails to say that the deceased loved this or that, that he had such or such

a habit. Piótr Vasílitch, his wife, and all the members of his household pass their time in a very monotonous manner—peaceably and quietly; they enjoy happiness . . . . because there is no other happiness on earth.